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INSPIRATION:

THE INFALLIBLE TRUTH AND DIVINE AUTHORITY

OF

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.



# INSPIRATION:

THE INFALLIBLE TRUTH AND DIVINE AUTHORITY

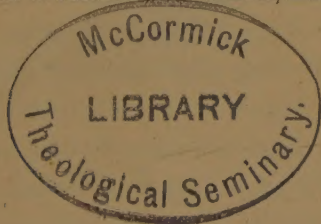
OF

THE HOLY SCRIPTURES.

BY

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## P R E F A C E.

AT a time like the present, when we are so frequently taught that the Bible cannot be believed in the same way that words spoken by God are to be believed, the following treatise, as an attempt to vindicate the ancient and catholic faith of the Church of Christ on the subject, can require no introduction or apology.

The doctrine of the infallibility of the one record which we have of a supernatural revelation from Heaven, is so vitally connected with the grounds of a Christian's faith, and affects, in a manner so fundamental, the certainty of all that we believe and hope in reference to God, that the importance of it can hardly be over-estimated, viewed whether in its theological or practical bearings. Beyond even its strictly doctrinal and religious aspects, the controversy about the inspiration of the Bible opens up the inquiry as to whether or not we have any objective standard of truth for man, apart from the revelation or the inspiration proper to his own rational and spiritual nature; and this, in turn, leads directly to the questions both of the supernatural character and of the historical veracity of the Scripture volume.

The extent to which doubts as to the infallibility of the Bible mingle with the discussions, and underlie the controversies, both religious and scientific, of the present day, is due not altogether either to the alleged incredibility of the

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doctrine of inspiration in itself, or to the difficulty in regard to the proof of it. These doubts have often a deeper source. They are frequently, and perhaps, in many cases, unconsciously connected with a feeling of the incredibility of the supernatural in general; they are mingled and allied with difficulties felt as to the historical veracity of Scripture; they are sometimes strengthened if not originated by an unwillingness to acknowledge any law or standard of opinion and belief beyond a man's own feelings or convictions. The controversy as to the authority to be conceded to the record of God's revelation, and the unsettled state of feeling in regard to it both within and beyond the Church, are connected with wider and more fundamental questions than that of the infallibility of the Bible; and it is hardly possible to discuss it aright without adverting to these questions, and endeavouring to separate between them and that of inspiration. Hence the earlier portion of this work is devoted to what the author cannot but regard as indispensable to a satisfactory discussion of the inspiration of Scripture,—namely, a right adjustment of the point in debate between the friends and opponents of the doctrine, and an accurate exhibition of the state of the question. Preliminary controversies settled or set aside, it will be found that the question as to the inspiration of Scripture admits of a far easier adjustment.

But while recent controversies have brought into view other and wider questions that must first be disposed of before it is possible to deal justly with that of inspiration, they have served also, in no small degree, to narrow the field of discussion as regards both its real nature and its proper evidence. The number and variety of theories that have been offered to explain its nature, and the searching criticism to which each in its turn has been subjected, mark a period in the discus-



sion so far advanced, as to enable us, better than before, to form an accurate estimate of the doctrine, and rightly to define both its extent and limits. The ordeal of controversy through which it has passed, has contributed to a separation between what is and what is not essential to it, and caused it to reappear in its original and scriptural simplicity; and the multitude of theories invented to explain it, have served only to bring out more distinctly the truth, that inspiration, as a fact supernatural, can be explained by no theory at all. The progress of the discussion in recent times has led to the same result that controversy as to other cardinal articles of the faith in the former history of the Church has brought about;—it has served to define more clearly what belongs to the substance, as contradistinguished from the form, of the doctrine which the Church of Christ is interested and bound to maintain, and to place on its proper foundation as to evidence the truth in dispute. It is useless to contend for human theories of a scriptural doctrine, when the doctrine itself is to be defended against the enemy; and it is worse than useless—it is fatal—to mistake and to substitute the one for the other. Without seeking to know more of inspiration than the result accomplished by the supernatural agency of God through means of it, we ought to be contented when we can establish by its proper evidence the twofold fact of the infallible truth and of the divine authority of the inspired word.

This is all that the author has endeavoured to accomplish, after laying down the proper state of the question as between the friends and opponents of the doctrine in debate. He ventures to think that it is all that is desirable to attempt, in seeking to establish the scriptural fact of the plenary inspiration of the record in which God has embodied His supernatural revelation.

In handling a subject which has been so largely discussed, and from such opposite points of view, and around which have been gathering the thoughts and efforts of so many earnest inquirers, especially of late, any claims to originality would be out of place, and incompatible with the author's object. His aim has been to set forth fully and distinctly the doctrine of Scripture on the subject, and to exhibit the evidences we have for it in their proper order and connection. In doing so, he is not conscious of having spoken in any other interest than that of truth, or of being influenced by any other authority than that of the Word of God; and his desire is, that what he has written may contribute, in however humble a measure, to the edification of the Church of Christ.

EDINBURGH, *January* 1865.

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# INSPIRATION.

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## CHAPTER I.

### PRELIMINARY TRUTHS.

THE exact position which the question of Inspiration occupies among the evidences of Christianity, is a point of some importance both for the order and for the understanding of the argument. In receiving the Bible in the sense in which the Church of Christ has uniformly received it, as the word of God, and the only infallible standard of belief and duty, there are various truths, besides that of its inspiration, implied or presupposed in the reception of it. It is desirable to separate between these, and especially to discriminate between the *inspiration* of Scripture and other characters that belong to the sacred volume, in order that we may understand what inspiration is, and what are the proper evidences by which it is established.

I. If the Bible contains a *Revelation* in the ordinary and proper sense of the word, or a communication of truth and knowledge from the Most High God to His human creatures, then the very first element involved in the notion of it is the idea of the *Supernatural*. In whatever manner the communication has been made, and in whatever shape it is recorded in Scripture, it must imply a supernatural act on the part of God. The revelation from Heaven which is embodied in the Bible is itself a miracle, over and above the

many miracles which it has recorded. It takes for granted the possibility of the supernatural, and is itself an example of it, apart altogether from those special instances of the supernatural by which it is accredited and illustrated.

In making such a statement, it is not necessary to enter into any discussion as to hypothetical cases which might or might not be possible. It is of no practical importance to argue whether or not a divine message could have been conveyed to man, and accredited to his belief, by any other means than those actually employed, and by methods not involving the use of the supernatural. Whether the truths of a revelation from God like Christianity could have been introduced into the world by means of some inward light given to all men, and recommended to their acceptance by natural evidence that had no miraculous attestation from above, is a question the solution of which is not necessary to the argument. To most minds it will appear all but certain, that when God breaks the silence of heaven, and speaks to men a message of eternal truth; when He departs from the ordinary course of His providence, and imparts the knowledge of Himself, not through His works, but through His word; when He makes discoveries to them of things which reason and conscience could never themselves have discovered,—the revelation itself must, in the proper sense of the term, be supernatural. But it is not needful to enter into such a discussion. There is no room for it in the case of that revelation which the Bible embodies and records. Christianity claims to be itself a supernatural communication from God, much of which reason could never have discovered, and all of which, whether reason could have discovered it or not, professes to have come as a direct message from heaven. It is God-given, and not man-given. The claim to be supernatural, made by Christianity, cannot be separated from Christianity itself. Whatever other revelations are or profess to be, the revelation of the Bible is itself a sign from heaven.

But apart from the supernatural element involved in the very idea of a revelation, the records of Christianity embody

a multitude of miraculous events so interwoven with its doctrines and histories, and so many and marked, that it is impossible to divide between the miracle of the revelation and the miracle recorded in it—accepting of the one as true, while the other is rejected as false. Not only with the possibility of the miraculous, but also with the fact of numberless miracles, Christianity as a religion must stand or fall.

The Bible professes to exhibit the history of this world for a period of four thousand years, beginning with that one miracle of creation which forms the representative and precedent for all the rest, and extending onward until the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, in which all the supernatural works done in the earth were summed up. Between these two dates it represents the world as a theatre on which God has been gradually but progressively working out, both through His ordinary providence and through His supernatural intervention, the great plan of grace. Although His miraculous interferences are not evenly spread over the whole course of the history, yet they are grouped around certain eras in it, marked as turning-points in the development of the divine scheme, and are essential to its progress. At each crisis when they occurred they were steps in the movement of God onward through the ages, until they found their fulness in the coming of Christ. As represented in the Scripture history, miracles form parts of the great plan unfolding upon the earth, necessary to its completeness, and elements in its success. Taking the Bible for what it pretends to be, namely, a view or record of God's doings upon the earth in the way both of providence and grace, it is impossible not to confess the intimate and essential union between the miraculous element and Scripture history, from its commencement to its close.

It is needless, then, to speak of separating the supernatural in Christianity from Christianity itself, and accepting the Bible without its miracles. Were there no other reason against such a step, it were reason enough that the traces of the supernatural—whether miracles of power or of knowledge—

are so numerous in its pages, and so thickly interspersed through the record, that to cut out every passage that directly or indirectly involves the reality of it, would leave the Bible itself but a mutilated fraction of what it presently is.

But it is not alone the number of the miracles that forbids it. Their connection with the Scripture record is of a kind that makes them inseparable from it. They are not, like the supernatural events of profane history, embellishments that can be spared from the narrative without injury to its continuity and completeness; or excrescences that can be cut off; or a foreign element that can be sorted out from its proper teaching, and set aside as no part of it. On the contrary, the shape and movement of events in the Bible are dependent on the supernatural action; and the results of the human history which it records, are ruled, and coloured by the super-human influences that predominate in the midst of them. The natural and the supernatural in the narratives of the sacred volume are blended, so as to form one organic whole, which cannot be analyzed into its component parts, but must be accepted or rejected in its integrity and as it stands.

Even were it possible to separate between what has been intimately joined together in Scripture, without destroying the substance of the text, it could not be done without fatally destroying the moral character of the religion. Christianity bears upon its front a profession that it comes from God, and is attested by His miraculous attestations; the Author of Christianity pointedly and frequently appealed to the works that He did, as evidence that He bore the commission of His Father; and He was contented to abide the decision which such an appeal involved, when He claimed from His enemies to be believed, if not for His own, yet at least for His works' sake. To answer this appeal by the denial or rejection of the miracles of the Bible, is to destroy at one blow both the outward evidences to which it points, and the moral character of the religion which it records. The claim made to the power of working miracles, and the appeal to them as the test and witness of His authority, leave no alternative but either

to receive the teaching as a revelation from Heaven, or to reject the teacher as one that has untruly said that he comes from God. Either the works on which He built His doctrine were supernatural, or that doctrine has wrongfully claimed a divine authority over the conscience.

It is indeed impossible to deal with the miracles of the Bible as if they were mere external accessories or superfluous accompaniments of Christianity, which may be accepted or rejected without affecting the truth or spiritual value of Christian doctrine. They are not rare facts in the long course of the world's experience as God's world, few in number, and exceptional in character—scattered at distant intervals over the sacred narrative. They are not works foreign to the footsteps of the Divine Agent as He advances onward from age to age in the history of human salvation, and makes both the things in heaven and the things in earth contribute to that end for which Christ in the fulness of time came. They are not occurrences that, whether true or false, can be separated from the moral character of Christ or Christianity; and which, when put aside, make it easier for the understanding and the conscience to accept of both. Christianity is itself the great miracle, and embraces manifold others within its bosom. Without any trace of the supernatural in itself, or accompanying its teaching, it would not be possible, or indeed worth while, to believe it at all.

But to speak of the intimate and inseparable connection between the supernatural element and the religion of the Bible, is much to understate the case. The Christian revelation has been not so much connected with miracles, as constituted by them. The supernatural facts of Christianity, rightly viewed and interpreted, are to a large extent the doctrines of Christianity. The central truths of that spiritual system taught in Scripture have been embodied in outward and sensible facts of a supernatural kind; and these facts are themselves the great revelation which God has vouchsafed of the truths. Perhaps a better and more accurate view of the miracles of Scripture than is commonly taken, would bring



out the lesson in regard to them all, that it is God's method to reveal Himself by facts rather than by propositions ; and that in those supernatural events which have been wrought on the earth, and recorded in the Bible, there is a spiritual meaning as deep and true as is found even in its words. The doctrines of creation and a Creator, as against Pantheism and emanation on the one hand, and Materialism on the other, could never have been taught by any series of abstract propositions as they have been taught by that first miracle on record, the fact of creation.

But whatever may be said of the spiritual meaning to be read in the many miracles to be found from first to last in Scripture, there can be but one opinion as to the proposition, that the peculiar and essential truths of Christianity have been both constituted and revealed in the fact of God manifested in the flesh. The gospel of Christ is made up of what Christ was, and what He did. His doctrine is identified with the fact of His supernatural history. The revelation of truth that He gave, was found, not so much in the words of His lips, as in the revelation of Himself,—in the discovery vouchsafed of the unseen God in the person of His incarnate Son, and in the declaration made of the Father's character and will, in the life and works and history on the earth of Immanuel. The incarnation of the second person of the adorable Godhead—His miraculous conception—the mysterious union of the divine and human natures in the person of Christ Jesus—His superhuman life, and still more superhuman death for sin—His resurrection from the dead, and His ascension to the right hand of God,—these are the supernatural facts of Christianity, compared with which all other miracles of the Bible are as nothing ; and these also are the facts that not only reveal, but contain, the sum and substance of the doctrine which Christianity teaches. The gospel of salvation is identified with those miraculous events, and embodied in them. Christianity is summed up in Christ. The supernatural is of the essence not only of Bible history, but of Bible doctrine. To reject the one, is no less than to reject the other.



It is no true view, then, of the miracles of the Bible, to look upon them as insulated occurrences in the narrative of its events, or at least outward adjuncts, separable from the substance of Christianity itself. It is an imperfect view of the supernatural elements of the Christian faith, to regard them in no other or higher light than as credentials of a spiritual truth, which finds a better and stronger evidence in its adaptation to the nature and the need of man. It is impossible, in any proper estimate of their character and office, to divorce them from the system of which they form a part, and to which, in a degree not to be undervalued, they contribute not only their evidential, but their doctrinal support. If it were merely the occurrence, in the course of the Scripture narrative, of some marvellous event, singular in its position and unintelligible in its object, which had to be accounted for, it might come to be a mere question of the trustworthiness of the historian, or of his text in the particular instance. If it were even a series of such events, having in themselves no spiritual significance, and forming no integral portion of the doctrinal system of Christianity, however much they might serve to act the part of evidence in the way of supernatural witnesses to its reality, they might nevertheless be disjoined from its truths without the sacrifice of the latter. But it is impossible to look upon the history of the Son of God in such a light. His manifestation in the flesh was no singular or accidental accompaniment of Christianity, but the essence of it. His life and death were not only or chiefly the outward credentials of His doctrine, but rather the sum and substance of it. They were not the divine confirmations of a Christian's faith, but the object of his faith. A saving belief in the gospel of Jesus, is a belief in what Jesus was and did. If these were supernatural; if He was the Son of God, and if the life that He lived and the death He suffered in the flesh, were those of a divine person in our nature; then here we have an experimental evidence to show that the whole of Christianity must stand or fall with, not merely the possibility, but the fact, of the supernatural.

In approaching, then, the subject of the inspiration of the Bible, the very first idea which presents itself, is the supernatural character of the revelation which it contains; and without this idea implied and taken for granted as a confessed fact, it is impossible and useless to proceed with the argument.

When we say that the supernatural element is presupposed in the Christian revelation, we mean that it was *given* by God; not in the way in which He has given men reason, or the discoveries of truth which reason makes; but *given* by God, in the sense that He has communicated the revelation in a miraculous manner to the mind of the parties who received and recorded it in Scripture. The fact that the revelation is supernatural, is in no way dependent on the manner in which the miraculous message of truth and wisdom was conveyed to the parties receiving it, or on the shape in which they embodied the message in the book or books that transmit it to our hands. Whether it was by miraculous voice, or miraculous vision, or miraculous impress on the spirit,—whether the ear or the eye of the prophet, or, without its ordinary inlets of thought, the mind itself, was made directly cognizant of the God-given truth revealed, is a question that does not in the least affect the character of the revelation as supernatural. Whether, again, the communication so made by God to His servant was embodied in written speech for the benefit of others, or, unspoken, was hidden and retained within the heart that first received it; whether, if recorded and published to others, it was written down by the command and under the guidance of God, or left to be put in writing at the will and by the natural powers of the author; whether the record of the revelation was composed and completed by one man, at one time, and in one place, or by many men, in different countries, with various tongues, and separated from each other by hundreds of years;—these are points that do not touch the fundamental idea inseparable from any revelation, in the proper sense of the term, or at all events inseparable from the revelation embodied in Scripture, that it has

come in a miraculous manner from God, and that both itself and its contents are supernatural.

The order of the apologetical argument plainly requires, that before proceeding to deal with the matter of inspiration, this question as to the supernatural character of the revelation should be held as closed. Without this, it would be impossible to advance one step in the discussion, or if possible, it would be useless. If it is to be held that a miracle is a thing impossible in any sense and for any purpose, then a revelation from God, in the meaning in which the Church of Christ believes that it is contained in the Scriptures, is also impossible; and it were even worse than folly to attempt to show that it is inspired. If the possibility or the fact of the supernatural, as belonging to the contents of the Bible, is even regarded as a point in doubt, and to be left over as an open question for public consideration, it were a waste of time and strength, besides being an inversion of the proper order of the argument, to offer evidence of its inspiration. It is impossible, as we have seen, to separate between the Bible and the supernatural character of that message from God which it professes to declare. In one way or other the question must be settled, as to whether or not we have a proper and real communication of knowledge from heaven in Scripture, before we can be called on to try and determine whether the professed record of it is infallible or not. There are principles of evidence and methods of reasoning which it is easy to apply to the case of miracles, in order to judge whether they be true or fictitious. And not until these have cleared the ground, and settled the question that there is a supernatural communication from God to man, in one shape or other, embodied in the sacred volume, can it be a reasonable, or even a competent thing, to proceed to the ulterior question, as to what that shape is, and what are the kind and measure of authority or truth to be conceded to it. In proceeding, then, to open up the discussion on the inspiration of the Bible, we must take for granted as a preliminary truth, assumed in the argument, and not to be disputed on either

side, that the Bible, in one form or other, contains a divine and supernatural communication from God. Whatever is implied in this proposition must be held as conceded by both parties, and available for either, in the controversy on Inspiration.

II. Another preliminary position that must be assumed as proved in entering on the discussion as to the inspiration of Scripture, is the *historical veracity* of the authors of Scripture. On the one side, and because embodying a real and direct communication from God, the Bible immediately allies itself with the element of the supernatural, to deny the possibility or the reality of which would inevitably lead to the rejection of the Bible itself in the only sense in which the Christian Church receives it, or in which it is worth contending for. But, on the other side, and because it is the authorship of men, the Bible is connected with their ability and trustworthiness as writers, for the claims which it puts forth to be received as a credible account of the revelation which it professes to have embodied in its pages.

Neither the supernatural character of the ideas and facts which it pretends to record as a revelation from God, nor yet the historical veracity of the writers who profess truly to relate it, is a matter to be assumed without proof, or believed without sufficient warrant. But the evidence relevant and sufficient to establish both these propositions has often been adduced, and must be taken for granted as conclusive, before it is proper or even possible to pass onward to the different and ulterior question of whether or not the writings are inspired by God. To mix up these two questions would lead only to confusion and error as to both. The proper evidence to prove that the Scriptures contain a supernatural communication from God, is different from the proper evidence to prove that the authors of the Scriptures were honest and competent as authors; and, again, the evidence relevant and sufficient to prove the inspiration of their writings, is something widely different from both. However much, in his practical estimate of Bible truth, and in the

spiritual application of it to cases of belief or duty, a Christian man may be wont to conjoin or even identify the question of a supernatural message from God and the veracity of the sacred penmen with the further question of the inspiration of their writings, yet, to avoid confusion and injury to the argument, they must carefully be distinguished. In tracing out the proper grounds and reasons of the Christian's faith, we must deal apart with, and establish by different proofs, the two facts of the supernatural character of the system of truth and fact found in Scripture, and the historical veracity of the men who have recorded it there; and after having proved these two facts, but not till then, is it warrantable and proper to enter upon the further and hardly less important subject of the inspired authority that attaches to the written record. Following out such a course, we are entitled to lay down as a second position, of a preliminary kind, in the controversy on Inspiration, the *historical veracity* of the Scripture penmen.

By the historical veracity of the authors of Scripture, is meant that sufficient knowledge of what they record, and that complete disposition to speak truly, which, in the case of uninspired men, give to their writings the character of credibility, on which their readers are accustomed to rely. The truth of profane history, and our belief of the facts which it transmits, rest on no other foundation than this. Given the two requisites of perfect truthfulness and competent knowledge in the case of an ordinary historian, and we have no hesitation in accepting as trustworthy his statement of facts, however remote in point of time, or far removed from our own observation. Events at the distance of a thousand years from our day are in this way brought home to our conviction with as much certainty as contemporary occurrences; and although the evidence on which they rest is no more than moral evidence, it may in multitudes of cases amount to a degree of assurance that warrantably commands the belief and guides the conduct of every rational man.

The very same result is reached when the like principles of



historical evidence are applied to the case of the sacred volume. The fact that we claim for its authors an inspiration of a supernatural kind, does not destroy or diminish their trustworthiness as men, and their competency as ordinary witnesses. It does not rob their statements of the essential character of credible testimony, by impairing their veracity, or rendering their knowledge vain. It may give them an authority which ordinary witnesses do not possess. It may furnish them with a right to claim our belief, which uninspired historians cannot show. But viewing it apart from its inspiration, the historical veracity of the Bible rests upon the same footing of evidence and certainty as that of any other perfectly authenticated work.

In one important respect, the historians of a supernatural revelation possess an advantage over profane historians that ought to be duly understood and estimated, in judging of their testimony. In the case of uninspired writers, the facts that they relate, lying as they do to a large extent beyond the field of their own observation or immediate knowledge, must be accepted by them at the hands of others who have better opportunities of information than themselves, but yet may be mistaken or deceived in what they communicate. The human historian best qualified as to opportunities of knowledge and acquaintance with the facts he narrates, must of necessity take many of them at second hand, and from sources more or less distantly removed from the facts themselves. It cannot be so with the historians of a revelation given to them directly and immediately from God. Their acquaintance with what they are called upon to record, originates in a source near and not afar off; and the informations they convey are dependent on a knowledge never remote, but always personal to the informer. If the fact of a supernatural and direct communication from God to the writers of Scripture personally be admitted at all, it at once shuts out the possibility of second-hand information and knowledge drawn with difficulty through defective channels and from a remote source. If a revelation has been given, and is con-



tained in the sacred volume, there is plainly involved in such a fact the concession, that the mind of the prophet has been brought into immediate and direct contact with the everlasting fountain of knowledge, from which the facts and truths he records are derived; and that, unlike other historians, for all he relates, whether previously to the revelation he was acquainted with it or not, he is indebted to his own knowledge, given by God, and not to that of another and a distant witness.

There are, indeed, many portions of the Bible that embody facts of which the writers had certain knowledge, having been eye or ear witnesses of what they declare. In regard to these the authors stand, irrespective of their higher character as inspired men, exactly on the same footing of historical veracity as common authors, who may have had, in regard to their narratives, the same opportunities of knowledge. To a very large extent the Bible is historical in this sense; and may, like other books similarly circumstanced, claim the credit, over and above its inspiration, of that ordinary credibility which is conceded to the latter. But the prophetic books of the Old Testament, and the Apocalypse of the New, are examples of writings that cannot be regarded as historical in this strictest and highest sense. It cannot properly be said of these that their contents are derived from human witnesses, either at first or second hand. In like manner, there are numerous passages, even in the historical portions of Scripture, which record facts or truths which no natural sources of knowledge on the part of the writers, and no information derived from human testimony, near or remote, could possibly have made them acquainted with. The narrative of the six days' work of creation cannot be called historical in the sense of having come from the ordinary sources of human history, or been known to the writer either from his own eye-witness or from the information of other men. Shall we concede then to the disbeliever, that these books, and portions of books, have no credibility at all derived from the sufficient knowledge and perfect veracity of the men who wrote them?

Or shall we not rather say, that although drawn from a different source of knowledge, that knowledge was as complete, and their testimony in regard to it as trustworthy, as if it had come from the evidence of their own eyesight, or indirectly and more remotely from the eyesight of others? Those who admit the supernatural character of the revelation which the Bible professes to contain, and understand what is implied in the pregnant admission, can hardly deny that the revelation of the Almighty, given to His servant for the very purpose, is to him a source of knowledge as complete and certain, and in every respect as reliable, as the perception of the outward eye, or the hearing of the outward ear, in the case of personal observation or of human testimony. The vision given to the prophet by God, when his eye was shut, or the voice spoken to the inner spirit when his ear slept, was to him a means of information not less clear and true than could have been supplied either by his personal observation of the facts, or by the witness of others.

To put the matter in this way, is indeed to understate the case. When God by special revelation makes known facts or truths which He seeks to be written down for ever, are we not warranted to say that the prophet has imparted to him a knowledge more true and perfect than knowledge obtained in any other way? When God speaks to His servant the things which He desires to make known to him and to others, is it not a testimony better and more immediate than human testimony to the like effect and to the same person? It is important to estimate aright the historical veracity that may be properly attributed to the Bible in its strictly historical character and portions. But it is no less important to estimate aright the credibility of the Bible, not only in its historical portions strictly so called, but also in those portions in which the writers had the source of their knowledge from above, and not from beneath, and when the information from which they speak to us was given not by man, but by God.

These two things are not inconsistent with each other; neither are they the same. The witness to what they record

emitted by the writers of Scripture in all cases from a source of knowledge supernatural, may, in many instances, co-exist along with another witness emitted by the same writers, and to the same effect, from a source of knowledge natural to them. The command issued to them by God, to record for the benefit of the Church in future times certain facts or truths which may have been known to them previously from their own observation or the testimony of others, could not nullify or supersede their personal knowledge; so that they were in circumstances to declare, both that God had certified to them these things, and also that to the same things their own knowledge bore witness. We cannot doubt that in the historical portions of Scripture, what was given them by God to write in a book for the information of others, sometimes consisted, in part or in whole, of what they were cognizant of as eye or ear witnesses, or had somehow learned through other channels of information. In such cases there is a twofold witness, corresponding to the twofold source from which the Bible speaks to us. As recipients of a communication from God to be conveyed to others, its authors can testify that God has showed them these things; and, irrespective of their credibility as human historians, they are entitled to be believed, because they can give us the warrant of His word for what they say. But over and above their office as recipients of a special revelation from God, they possess in many instances the character and trustworthiness of ordinary historians, who write what they themselves have known or seen; and therefore they are entitled to be believed on the different and additional ground, that for what they record we have the warrant of their own word. The testimony borne to Scripture truths when God addresses us through the lips of His prophets, and calls upon us to believe because He has declared them, is not inconsistent with the further testimony borne to the same truths by men who of their own knowledge can ratify them; neither are these two witnesses to be confounded or identified, as if they were one and the same. Injustice is often done to the Christian argument in this way,

by not distinguishing between the evidence derived from the personal knowledge of the sacred penmen, and the evidence derived from the supernatural revelation they had from God. In respect of much of what we read in the sacred volume, the testimony of the historian is added to that of the prophet. To estimate the full weight of the apologetic argument, we must discriminate between the evidence of men speaking on the ground of personal knowledge or observation, and the evidence of the same men speaking on the ground of the supernatural revelation enjoyed by them. The force of the argument is to be calculated not by identifying, but by adding the two.

The extent to which an historical character<sup>1</sup> belongs to the Bible, is a remarkable peculiarity connected with it. Considerably more than one-half of its contents is made up of historical matter in the stricter sense of the word ; while even in other portions, such as the prophetic and didactic, there is frequently such full and specific mention of times and places, of persons and events, as to give them, not indeed an historical character, but at least a connection, noticeable and real, with the course of history.

But the historical character of Christianity as a revelation is more especially to be seen in the intimate alliance between its truths and the events of the world for the long period of four thousand years. Those central doctrines of revelation which are commonly spoken of as the gospel, are not so much founded on the history of Christ, as they are themselves the events of that history. The spiritual truths which a sinner is called upon to believe for the saving of his soul, have been revealed primarily and chiefly in the form of historical facts embodied in the life and death, the resurrection and ascension, of the Son of God. The Gospels and the Acts, which contain the narrative of these facts and their immediate results in the

<sup>1</sup> I would refer to the valuable contribution to the controversy in connection with the authority of the sacred volume, entitled, 'The Bible and Modern Thought,' by Rev. T. R. Birks. It is an able and conclusive argument, in a popular and effective form.

world, form more than one-half of the New Testament. But this history does not stand alone. We find that it is closely connected with, and to a large extent dependent upon, a previous and larger one, reaching from the beginning of the world, and stretching onward with a continuity unbroken to the close of the Old Testament period; and this earlier history fills up the larger portion of the first of the two volumes of which the Bible is composed.

As in the history contained in the New Testament we find the doctrine of human salvation revealed in the form of historical facts, so in the narrative of events at the commencement of the Old Testament history we have revealed in a like form the doctrine of human ruin and sin. Between these two dates we have the narrative of the development of God's actings and movements upon the earth in His plan of grace,—connecting, by a series of historical events, the fall with the redemption, and exhibiting in these events the divine method of dealing with sin, and of working out man's salvation from it. The proper interpretation of this long history of thousands of years is necessary to the true and full understanding of Christianity, which is less a system of spiritual truths presented in an abstract form, than a series of facts and examples exhibiting the manner in which God deals with the sin that He hates, and provides for the recovery of the sinner whom He pities. The historical annals of the Bible, embracing as they do the story of the world since its creation, and of the human race from its cradle,—telling of man both in his unfallen and fallen state,—beginning at a date so remote that no contemporary accounts exist to be confronted with them, and reaching downward to the fulness of time,—running parallel with the rise, greatness, and fall of many of the mightiest nations of antiquity, and tracing the footsteps of God through human history to its consummation in the manifestation of His Son upon the earth,—constitute an essential part of the Christian revelation, inseparable not only from its form, but also from its substance. The two grand truths of man's sin and man's salvation have been embodied in his-



torical facts at the commencement and at the close of the Scripture narrative; and between these facts the history that intervenes has been both acted and written, to exhibit in examples the divine righteousness in dealing with the one, and the divine grace in providing, and preparing for, the other.

In the fact that history has been thus made to do the work and teach the doctrines of revelation, the Bible stands alone and distinguished from all other systems of religion, and all other books professing to record a communication of truths from God. The easiest form, and perhaps the most natural, for a fabricated revelation to assume, is that of direct dogmatic teaching, in which doctrine shall be inculcated in abstract propositions and duty enjoined by formal precepts,—keeping clear, as far as possible, of any near and dangerous connection with the historical realities of time and place, persons and events. If facts are used at all, they will be used sparingly, and with a view to give the likeness of reality to unreal histories, or fashioned into fictitious parables and stories to illustrate or embellish the doctrine.

Such at least, to a very marked extent, is the character of the false revelations that have been palmed upon the world. In this respect Christianity presents a contrast to other religions hardly less than divine. None, indeed, but that same God who, by His almighty power and universal providence, controls and directs all the events of the world, governing and ordering all His creatures and all their actions, could have so made use of human history to embody and exemplify His truth. This history, as it has been selected and written in the Bible, has first of all been acted on the theatre of this earth, and through its successive ages, in order that it afterwards might be recorded there. God is both the actor and the writer. Unless it had been so, the acted events would not have furnished the written teachings in which they have been embodied. An ordinary historian may indeed select from the course of events in the world those of them that happen to suit and enforce his peculiar views, turning and accommodating them, after they have occurred, to the purpose



of illustrating, to some small extent, his instruction. But none but a divine Historian, who Himself had first ordered these events, and shaped them according to His pleasure, could have made human history to be itself His revelation, and many of the deeds done on the earth to be His acted parables, through successive generations, needing nothing but to be written down in a book and interpreted in order to teach His supernatural truths. The lessons that God has taught in His revelation were first written on the outward pages of history, and only afterwards written in the words and with the commentary and explanations of the Bible.

That selection of events from the history of the world which is actually found in the Bible, can be explained only on the principle that it is a narrative of God's proceedings with a view to man's recovery and salvation. It is a history, mainly and distinctively, of redemption. It travels between the two ideas of the world created by God, and the same world redeemed by God; and in the interval it exhibits, in a series of historical facts, the manner in which God deals with the great problem of moral evil,—facts which teach, with a clearness and impressiveness which no abstract or didactic teaching could possess, the main features of God's character, and the general principles of His moral government. It is God's world as made by Him, and then ruined by sin, with which the history begins; and it is the same world redeemed by Him, and to be restored, with which it concludes. Thousands of years run on between the beginning and the close; but in so far as the annals of these years have been recorded in Scripture history, they are filled up with God's dealings with sin and with grace.

First of all we have the experiment worked out, of man left to himself, from the date of the fall to the flood. It is the history of the grand trial of what man could do, through his own natural powers, to stay the onward ruin of sin, and to recover his own soul from destruction. Save the one promise at the outset, there was no outward teaching from God; excepting the ordinances of sacrifice and the Sabbath, there were no positive institutions of religion during fifteen hun-

dred years ; save the voices of Enoch or Noah, heard alone, there was no prophet from the Most High to warn men of sin, or to declare the way of salvation. And the experiment, carried on upon the wide scale of the whole earth, and prosecuted for hundreds of years, proved beyond controversy that there was no recovery for man in man himself, and that, left to his own unaided resources by God, he was insufficient for his own good. The trial of human strength, after it had shown itself to be weakness, and of human virtue unhelped, after it had lapsed into utter and irremediable wickedness, was closed by the waters of the flood ; and the history of the antediluvian age has proved, by the best of all evidence,—the evidence of experiment,—that man can never be either a revelation or a religion to himself.

A second experiment had to be made, and was prosecuted during the patriarchal period. The experiment of natural religion common to man, and of such a revelation of God as the works of creation and the teachings of conscience taught to all alike, had been tried and found wanting. Now, particular individuals were chosen to receive extraordinary communications from God, and to be the teachers of others ; the revelation of divine truth concerning sin and a Saviour was directed into the special channel of the patriarchal line ; and the supernatural light, which nature could not supply, was preserved and transmitted in a selected order of prophets and teachers personally instructed by God for the purpose. Along with the oral and traditionary revelation communicated from them, there was a system of symbolical teaching by outward ordinances begun ; and the verbal and typical instruction in divine things went on together, in a twofold method of manifestation. But this experiment of personal revelations, and a traditionary religion handed down by patriarchs, was insufficient to preserve the knowledge of God upon the earth, and especially to declare His mind as to moral evil and the way of recovery. Beyond the single household or family in which the prophet dwelt and the revelation was preserved, and sometimes scarcely there, there was no light of divine truth in the

dwellings of men. And the experiment, prosecuted throughout the patriarchal period, from the date of the flood until the exodus, has proved, by the historical evidence of facts, that an unwritten and traditionary revelation made to selected men for the benefit of others, even though assisted by some instruction in the form of significant and standing ordinances, is helpless to meet and turn back the flood of darkness and depravity.

A third lesson had yet to be taught by the course of human history, when shaped and overruled by God to declare His truth, before men could be educated and shut up by this schoolmaster unto Christ. Instead of a solitary individual here and there amid the universal darkness, chosen out of the rest to be the depositary of the message of God, a nation was selected to receive in fuller and larger measure the light of divine truth. Instead of an oral revelation, restricted to brief and scanty hints of religious teaching and promise, and entrusted to the channel of tradition for transmission, there was given to Moses a revelation to be written in a book, and read in the hearing of Israel from generation to generation. Along with this written revelation there was a large and extensive system of instruction in divine truth by means of outward and public ordinances for daily use; as a nation they were fenced about with rites and institutions from Heaven, significant and symbolical; and their national life and actions were divinely shaped into a system of religious discipline and teaching for their spiritual profit. That God who had become, through human ignorance and unbelief and sin, almost an unknown God in the world He had made, was pleased to dwell, under a visible symbol, in the centre of the nation, so that men could not deny His presence without denying the evidence of their own senses. From the date of the exodus, itself a divinely ordered type, upon a public and national scale, of divine truth, the events of human history were fashioned into symbols of supernatural doctrine, according to a standard at once more extensive and more distinct. A church dedicated to God, and populous with the pictorial ordinances that spake of Him, was set up co-extensive

with the people of Israel. A nation was made itself a grand type of divine truth. Public persons and occurrences were, under the special arrangement of God, made significantly to teach spiritual things; and the course of human history was crowded more and more with the manifestations or the promises of a coming salvation. Yet all was in vain. This third experiment of a written revelation and a visible church, and standing ordinances of worship, and speaking symbols of divine truth, and above all, a God visible in His sanctuary, was wrought out, like the former experiments, upon an extensive scale and for a lengthened time, and, like them, without success. Israel would not know; God's people would not consider Him. And the nation in whose history this grand exhibition of God's character and truth, and of man's unbelief and sin, was exemplified, were sold into captivity, and because of this unbelief have forfeited their place and standing as a people.

But although each experiment in the course of human history, as it is related and embodied in the Old Testament, has one after another failed of success, yet they have not been tried in vain, if they have brought back men, as their last resource, to that final experiment recorded in the history of the New. Both the character of God and the character of man, in connection with the matter of sin and salvation, have been divinely developed and recorded in the course of the past, in a manner so true and complete and incontrovertible, as to shut out all hope of deliverance from anything that is in man, or in the dealings of God with man, short of that method of salvation which is in Christ. The history acted out under the earlier dispensation and recorded in the Old Testament, in its various and successive failures, has sufficiently established this by the evidence of experiment. The interval of time between the close of the history in the earlier volume, and the commencement of another and better history in the later—during which all further special dealings on the part of God with men ceased, and the ominous silence of the record appears to indicate that any further trials in the same direc-

tion were in vain—seems to look like a pause which, if it forms the proper close of the failures in the past, may well introduce the success of the future. These failures are not failures, if they have by a sort of exhaustive process narrowed the conditions of the problem, and shut up the hopes of men to the one and last method for their salvation made known, not in the oral or written word, but in the personal revelation of the Eternal Word made flesh. The record of that method, as developed in His acts and life, gives the historical character to the New Testament, appropriately introduces the doctrinal books which follow, and interprets the spiritual and dogmatic meaning of the facts.

But the latter history cannot be understood aright, without understanding the former. The doctrine of salvation, as exhibited in the historic facts of the manifestation of the Son of God in the flesh, loses both its meaning and its value, when not viewed and interpreted in the light of the doctrine of sin as developed in the historic facts of the temptation and transgression and fall recorded at the opening of Genesis. And neither the one nor the other can be understood, as it is intended to be understood, unless we follow out that historic connection between the two which may be traced in the footsteps of God's providence, leading from the first to the second, and in that long series of divinely ordered events which have made human history, as recorded in the Bible, to be a revelation pregnant with spiritual truths. To deny or ignore the historical element in the Bible, or to attempt to separate between it and its doctrinal teaching, is simply an impossibility, without destroying the Christian revelation altogether. Before proceeding to inquire into the question of the inspiration of its writings, we must assume as proved the *historical veracity* of Scripture. So thoroughly is revelation identified with Bible history, that if the Bible be not historically true, it is a matter of no consequence whether it be inspired or not.

III. A third proposition which we must be entitled to hold as proved, before entering on the question of Inspiration, is



this, that *the Bible contains an authoritative and infallible standard of truth and duty, apart from ourselves.* This third proposition is intimately connected with, or rather involved in, the former two, and is altogether independent of the question as to whether or not the sacred volume is inspired. We say that the Bible *contains* such a standard; we do not say that the Bible *is* such a standard. Were the divine and plenary inspiration of the sacred volume satisfactorily established, in addition to the fact that it is historically the authentic and credible record of a supernatural communication given by God, we should be entitled to say of it, that it is, as well as that it contains, a certain and authoritative test of belief and practice. But before proceeding to the ulterior question of its inspiration, and in order to do so aright, we are not only warranted, but bound, in virtue of the two preceding propositions, to hold that it contains, in one form or other, and with more or less verbal accuracy, the only sure and ultimate standard of truth and falsehood, of right and wrong, in respect of all those matters on which it speaks, with a view to our belief and obedience.

If, indeed, the Bible did not in any shape embody a supernatural revelation from God, it could have no claims to be regarded as coming to us with His unerring truth and express authority attached to what it declares. Or if, being the record of such a revelation, it were destitute of all historical veracity as a record, it were impossible to say what in it possessed the authority of God, and came to us as His truth, and what did not. But if, on the contrary, it both contains a revelation from God, and has transmitted it to us in a record marked by that kind and measure of historical veracity which, in the case of other books, makes them worthy to be believed, then, independently of its inspiration, it must be accepted as the depository at least of an authoritative and infallible standard of truth and duty, apart from reason or conscience in man.

To what extent, on the supposition that the Bible is simply an historical and not an inspired record of a divine communication, the deposit of supernatural truth which it records



has been mingled with the imperfection or errors of the human historian, is a question which can receive its best, perhaps its only possible, answer in an appeal to the instance of other historical books. It is granted on the one side, that the authors of Scripture history were honest and competently informed, and therefore authentic and credible in the sense in which human historians are, whose writings are surely believed among us. It is granted on the other side, that neither in the case of profane historians nor in the case of the sacred penmen, do honesty and competent knowledge alone secure their readers against all imperfection and mistakes in their narratives. And the question comes to be, What margin must be allowed in the writings of both for errors which may exist, but are not inconsistent with perfect historical veracity, as regards the proper contents and real substance of their histories?

In dealing with such a question with a view to answer it in its application to Scripture as simply an historical book, the proper way is to inquire into what is found to be the case in the instance of profane historians confessedly accepted as trustworthy. In such cases there is to be found no systematic attempts to falsify, and, indeed, no intentional errors of any kind consciously introduced into their writings. Such defects would be inconsistent with the supposition that they are veracious historians. Neither are there broad and palpable misstatements in matters of fact, even unintentional and unconscious. This would be inconsistent with the supposition of competent knowledge on the part of the writers. But in profane historians, the best authenticated and most trustworthy, there are mistakes in matters of opinion honestly entertained and recorded; and even inaccuracies, minute and verbal, in questions of fact, written down unconsciously, while yet for all practical purposes their histories are true. Our experience in the case of ordinary books and authors justifies and requires this concession. And if the Scriptures had not been inspired by God, as well as written by perfectly credible human writers, we must have made the same concession as

to their narratives which experience has taught us to make in respect of profane authors. Errors arising out of dishonest intention or the absence of competent knowledge there could not have been ; errors arising from human imperfection, and connected with opinion or expression, there might have been. But all this would not have affected, in the case of Scripture history, as it does not affect in the case of profane history, its perfect truth in substance, or the historical veracity of the Scripture writers as worthy to be believed, when they tell us of what they know, or speak of a communication made to them by God.

Assuming the general historical veracity of any document, there are four different cases to be distinguished from each other when dealing with the question of error or imperfection attaching to it,—two in reference to the facts that are embodied in it, and two in reference to the opinions or truths recorded. *First*, in the case of facts patent to the senses, and known to the writers through their evidence, there can, with ordinary historians, credible and competent, be few inaccuracies beyond inaccuracies of expression, not touching the reality of the facts. *Secondly*, in the case of the like facts known to them from the testimony of witnesses similarly qualified as to credibility and competence, there cannot be very much more room for error. *Thirdly*, in the instance of opinions or truths communicated by other parties of sufficient honesty and knowledge, and recorded by historians, there may be more openings for mistakes, though not for serious or fundamental ones, as to the right understanding on their part of what is communicated, and therefore as to the accuracy of their report (for it is the truth of the report, and not of the opinions, that is in question). It is, *fourthly*, in the case chiefly of truths or opinions held by themselves, and spoken out of their own minds, that the common fallibility of human historians warrants us to expect in the record the occurrence of errors many or considerable.

So far as regards the Bible, it may be asserted that errors of this last class cannot occur in any instance, if it be admitted that it is all a revelation from God recorded by honest and

competent men ; because, although there is the expression of individual opinions or beliefs on the part of its authors to be found in its pages, yet the expression of them there is not without the warrant and direction of God authorizing the writer so to express them. But without arguing this point for the present, and setting aside, as connected with it, whatever in Scripture can be called the individual beliefs of the writers, declaring their own insight and apprehension of truth, it is plain that after this is conceded the whole substance of the Christian revelation remains entire, and perfectly independent of the concession. The first three cases cover the whole ground of Scripture fact and doctrine, making up the revelation from God to man embodied in the sacred volume. In the facts of which the writers were informed by the eye or ear, or which came to them through the testimony of credible human witnesses, or of God Himself as a witness better still, or of both, we have the whole historical contents of the Bible. In the opinions or truths, again, which the authors have recorded as given to them by the express revelation of God, and guaranteed by His word, we have the whole of the doctrinal contents of the Bible. Were they no more than human historians, honest and competent, but uninspired, and recording a supernatural communication from Heaven, we would be warranted in saying, that, in respect of all the matters with which it deals, with a view to our instruction, it contains within it the authority and the truth of God. Keeping out of view the higher fact of its inspiration, but accepting it as historically true, the analogy of other authentic and credible books justifies us in asserting that the errors which can be conceived as possibly attaching to it as an historical document, are so few in number and inconsiderable in value, that they cannot substantially affect it as a real depository of the mind of God ; and that therefore, taking even the lowest view of the Bible, it embodies, in a form rightfully fitted to command the submission of men, an available and authoritative standard of right and wrong in all questions of opinion or practice on which it decides.

In regard to opinions or truths not the product of the writer's own mind, but drawn from other and reliable sources, the Scripture historians have a peculiar advantage which gives them a claim to our belief that others do not possess. In the case of ordinary historians, they may be called upon, in some instances, to record the opinions of others, with which they are themselves wholly unacquainted, and which, when communicated from trustworthy quarters, are only partially understood; and thus, in recording them, they may be misstated, because unintentionally misapprehended. Although credible in other respects, yet in the one respect of competent knowledge the authors may have been defective. But such a case could not occur in connection with the penmen of Scripture, if they enjoyed a supernatural communication of truth at all, and if their teacher in the understanding of it was God.

The prophet, indeed, was in very many instances totally unacquainted beforehand with the truths which he was commissioned to write for the benefit of others: they might, indeed, be of a kind beyond the reach of man's intellect altogether; or they might be of a kind which, to be understood aright, must be spiritually discerned. But, in so far as it was necessary to accomplish the purpose of being recorded truly, and not untruly, we cannot but believe that the writers, under the hand of God, were taught with a knowledge that could not fail, or leave them in a state of doubt or misunderstanding as to what they should record. The truths themselves might be higher than the height of their minds, and deeper than the depth of their penetration; they might be spiritual, and therefore not understood aright by men who had not spiritual insight; so that they might, in many cases, be left to search, and perhaps in vain, what the Spirit which was in them did signify. But if there was a revelation of truth from God supernaturally given to His servants,—if they were commissioned and authorized, first to receive it, and then to record it, that others in distant lands and generations might receive it also at their hands, it would have defeated the very object for which it was given, if, from

misapprehension of its meaning, they were permitted to record a different truth, or perhaps a lie in its stead, or were left in any degree open to that misunderstanding or partial reception of it which, in the case of ordinary historians, proves a source of error. It is not necessary, even were it lawful, to inquire into that miraculous process of the presentation of truth from the mind of God to the mind of the prophet found in every case of supernatural revelation. But if it took place at all, it could not have included in it an element to frustrate the end in view ; or rather, it must have included in it that measure and kind of instruction in the truths recorded, necessary to their being put upon record without misstatement, so that the revelation actually embodied in Scripture should be God's, and not another.

Granted, then, the two facts of, first, a supernatural revelation contained in Scripture, and, secondly, the historical veracity of the record, and we are shut up to the acknowledgment of an infallible and authoritative standard of truth and duty, apart from our own nature, and superior to it. Whatever number and amount of minute and unimportant errors might be conceived as attaching to a merely human record of a superhuman revelation, they cannot, if restricted within the limits of complete historical veracity, destroy or impair the assurance, rising to a moral certainty, with which we are called upon to accept that Book, as containing both the truth of God and the authority of God, in a form fitted and entitled to rule our belief and obedience.

First of all, we have the *truth* of God in Scripture ; and because it is His truth, coming from Him as its source, guaranteed by the perfection of His nature, given to us for the very purpose of instructing and guiding us in spiritual things, and even taking the lowest view of it, unimpaired as to its substantial purity by any want of historical veracity in the record, it must have an excellency of power in itself, and a righteousness in its claim to be believed as true, which no other source of truth can possess. There may be other and co-operating sources of belief which God has given to His



intelligent creatures: in the depths of their rational or spiritual being, He may have laid the foundations of certainty to some extent to them, apart from the special revelations of Scripture; He may have made the lights of reason and of conscience in certain cases to rule over the firmament of human knowledge, guiding man on his earthly pilgrimage by night and by day; there may be within us intuitive convictions of sensible things, and intuitive convictions of moral things, to contradict which were itself a contradiction. But if a special revelation of light has come from the bosom of the Godhead to the heart of man; if the wisdom which dwelt with the Eternal Father from the beginning, has been embodied in human speech for our teaching, there can be no higher fountain-head from which the spirit of man can draw truth, and no source of certainty that rises above it. Even the certainty with which our intuitions in the department of outward and sensible knowledge rule our beliefs and conduct, is a certainty that has come from that God who has made certain to us the supernatural revelation which the Bible contains. The beliefs taught by conscience, and embodied in the fundamental convictions of our moral nature, are beliefs resting on no better ground than the appointment of Him who has made our reason so to speak, and who Himself has spoken His word, to be a witness to us no less sure. The discoveries of truth which science has treasured up in the past, and which the experience and belief of ages have confirmed, are discoveries gathered amid the darkness of nature, and not in that supernatural light which revelation has shed on spiritual things. Truth is indeed the same, whether it comes to us from the discoveries of reason or the discoveries of grace. Viewed objectively, there is no certainty in the one kind of truth which is not found in the other; but, viewed subjectively, or as regards our apprehension of it, God has given a fulness of light in revelation which He has denied to nature, and therefore to us has made the discoveries of the first to possess an assurance far greater than those of the second.



It is unreasonable, and indeed impossible, rightly to compare our beliefs in the department of sensible facts resting on our instinctive perceptions, and our belief in the department of Scripture truth resting on moral evidence. But we may compare as to certainty the spiritual truths which are taught by nature, and the religious knowledge taught by revelation. The thousand forms of spiritual belief or unbelief, different and opposite, which owe their origin to the religion of nature, tell unmistakeably of the doubtfulness of the source from which they are derived. The natural reason and conscience of one theorist,—the Christian consciousness of another,—the religious sentiment congenital to man of a third,—the spiritual insight of a fourth,—the religious intuitions of a fifth,—the verifying faculty of a sixth,—the special power in human nature that looks face to face upon God and divine truth of yet another,—have all been appealed to as the proper source of religious certainty, and by the multitude and diversity of the answers upon the plainest and most elementary questions in the science of faith, have proved themselves to be uncertain. The experience of the present, and the lessons of history in the past, alike declare that there is no source of religious assurance for man in man himself; and that although truth is to be believed for itself, and on whatever grounds of evidence or certainty it is recommended, yet, in so far as regards spiritual things, there is no resting-place for man, and no sure ground for his faith, except it is built upon God's revealed Word.

But besides the *truth*, we have also the *authority* of God connected with the revelation contained in Scripture, and going to make up that infallible and supreme standard of appeal in matters of belief and duty which has been given to us. There is implied, in the very first notion of a supernatural communication made by God to His creatures, the idea of a command on His part, and an obligation on theirs, to receive it as His, and comply with its requirements in the way both of belief and obedience; so that, apart from any express injunction to that effect, to reject it is to reject His

authority, and disbelief becomes sin. There is, in the case of every truth, whether natural or supernatural, whether revealed by God or discovered by man, a reason in itself, and in a certain sense a duty laid on us to receive and believe it as truth. In so far as regards the wide department of natural truth, and the discoveries of science within its own domain, there is no duty more willingly recognised, and no homage more readily paid, than those implied in the right which it claims to be believed.

But the right in this respect of natural and of revealed truth is very different indeed. Their respective claims to be believed are by no means the same, or equally imperative. Over and above the title that belongs to supernatural truth, in common with natural, to be accepted as true and not false, in virtue of its being true, there is a more special title that it possesses in consequence of its having been given us by God on His express authority for the purpose of being believed as His special message to us. There are two grounds on which we are called upon to yield up to it our faith and submission, not to be identified, but distinguished; the one a ground common to it with all truth, the other a ground peculiar to it as God's. It has a right to rule man's understanding and conscience which ordinary truth does not enjoy, derived from the fact that in every supernatural revelation, either by implication or express command, we are summoned to hear and receive God's word in a way in which natural knowledge is not addressed to us. Doubtless, in an inferior and secondary sense it may be said that God speaks to us through nature and reason and conscience, and that the meanest and most common truths derived from these quarters are truths of God. There ought to be, and there is, no disposition to deny or undervalue the claims which all truth derives from such a consideration, or possesses in itself, to be honoured and embraced. But independently of this, and over and above this, the truths of a supernatural message from God come to us with a more especial call and authority and intent from Him, in order to their being believed, so that the denial or rejection of them

is a dishonour done to His command, and in a peculiar manner an insult to His veracity. To disbelieve some of the great truths of nature, such as the law of gravitation, may be no more perhaps than a folly; to disbelieve some of the great truths of revelation, such as the divine mission of Christ, is a sin.

These two things, then, constitute the peculiarity of that test or rule of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood, necessarily embodied in any supernatural revelation from God historically authentic and credible,—namely, *infallible truth* and *supreme authority*. There is no other teaching distinguished by the same characteristics. Neither creation without, nor conscience within; neither reason in man, nor his religious intuitions; neither his rational nor his spiritual nature, can declare truth as revelation declares it, and demand to be believed as having the same authority or the same right to be heard. The range belonging to such authority, and the submission due to its dictates, are not inconsistent with reason and conscience in man, or with the commission which they administer, to guide and control, with a delegated rule, our opinions and our practice. It cannot be forgotten that the power claimed by revealed truth to rule the lesser lights of reason and conscience in our nature, is nothing else than an expression of the claims of Him who has revealed it; nor, so long as we admit it to be a revelation, and to come from Him, can we consistently refuse to own its authority, without denying our responsibility to God for our beliefs and our conduct.

It has often been alleged that it is impossible to reconcile such an authority as the Bible assumes with the rights of our moral nature, and the free exercise of thought in its search after truth. But such an objection strikes not so much against the particular form in which the authority is claimed by the Bible, as against the authority itself. Any test of right and wrong, aside from man's own natural and spiritual nature,—any standard of truth apart from his own discovery or convictions of truth,—any authority to declare

and enforce duty, independent of his own sense of duty, is liable to the same objection and beset with the same difficulties. But the objection and the difficulties are both inapplicable; or rather, they resolve themselves into that one great mystery which the advocates of revelation are not specially called upon to solve,—the mystery, namely, of the consistency of God's moral supremacy over man, with man's moral freedom under God.

If the Most High were not the Lord of the human conscience, and had no right to dictate what man is to own as truth and duty, it would be an unlawful usurpation to assume such an authority as the Bible assumes. If, possessing such an authority, and professing to dictate our belief and practice, He could give us no warrant of infallible truth for what we are required to believe, and invest with no character of sacred obligation what is done in compliance with His command, it would be an injury inflicted on the conscience. If, worse than that, He were to give to falsehood the rights of truth and require us to embrace it, or to enforce upon our obedience sin with the authority of virtue, it would be an act of violence fatal to our rational and moral nature, and fitted to overbear conscience and reason both. But when the reverse of all this is the case—when the dictates of revelation are based on an authority which is both righteous and supreme—when they are accredited and assured by a truth eternal and unchangeable—when they are evermore in harmony with the principles of our rational and moral nature, rightly and not wrongly instructed,—so far from a supernatural revelation being an injury to reason and conscience, it must be acknowledged to be a protection and help to both. The reason that is daily aided and taught by a teacher that cannot err, will have its capacities for truth enlarged, and its energies developed all the more by the training. The conscience that has its moral judgments and feelings of good and evil confirmed and established by the infallible decisions of a lawful authority, will be all the more competent and powerful to judge between the two on that account. In his search after truth,

the earnest inquirer will use and enjoy his freedom more freely, that in all his own doubts or difficulties he can test his results by a standard which never misleads. And in having embraced the truth, the Christian will rest upon it with all the more security and satisfaction, that he knows that it is God's truth and not his; that in believing it, he does so under the authority of the Most High; and that his faith is founded upon the veracity of the Almighty. So far is it from being true that an infallible and authoritative standard of faith and obedience, above us and apart from us, is inconsistent with the rational and moral nature of man, and destructive of the freedom of reason and conscience, that it is the very thing best adapted to the condition of a being whose understanding has been darkened and his nature depraved by moral evil, and who needs divine help to bring him out of darkness into light, and from sin unto holiness.

To deny the existence of such a standard altogether, is to affirm a condition of hopeless and universal doubt. To deny its existence, as given by God in revelation, and to assert the supremacy of reason or conscience, or any faculty of our rational and spiritual nature, in its place, is to make man the supreme law and infallible revelation to himself. It is only when we recognise in the Bible a supernatural revelation,—itself the depository of a divine rule of truth and falsehood, of right and wrong,—that we confess aright the supremacy of God and the responsibility of man. If such a standard is a thing impossible, consistently with the rational and spiritual nature which God has given us, it is vain to attempt to discuss or establish the doctrine of the divine inspiration of that volume which professes to contain it.



## CHAPTER II.

### PRELIMINARY OBJECTIONS.

IN determining the proper place of Inspiration in the apologetical argument, we are taught to distinguish and set by those preliminary truths which must be proved, or by mutual concession between its advocates and enemies held as established, before proceeding to the discussion of it. We must believe both the possibility and the reality of a supernatural communication from God, in one shape or other, before it is proper to enter upon the ulterior question as to whether or not the form in which it has been made is that of a book divinely inspired. We must believe in the ordinary historical veracity of the writers and the writings of Scripture; for to deny this, and to count them historically untrue, would make it impossible for God to have inspired them at all. We must believe in the existence of a divine and authoritative standard of truth and falsehood, of right and wrong, apart from our own nature; for if this be impossible, or inconsistent with reason and conscience in man, it is vain to attempt to prove that the record in which it claims to be embodied, is given by inspiration of God.

These are the main positions that must be accepted by any one prepared aright to enter on the argument of inspiration. They involve much, perhaps in a certain sense all, that is essential to Christianity itself, and absolutely indispensable to the salvation of the Christian. It is not necessary that we should give up the Christian faith, although we should be compelled to give up the doctrine of inspiration. Even without it, we have an historical Christianity not greatly different in its facts and in its doctrines from an inspired

Christianity. We have a supernatural communication from God, given with a view to the salvation of sinners. We have this communication contained in a volume true and trustworthy, at the very least, in the sense and to the extent that authentic and credible human history is true. And we have embodied in this history a divine standard of truth and duty, to be a rule of conduct in this life, and the foundation of hope for a future. There may be involuntary errors in the writings of men who had every wish to speak true. There may be unintentional misapprehension of opinions, or even facts, in the case of authors the best informed. There may be mistakes and different readings in the text of their writings, introduced in the course of the transmission of the manuscript from former to recent times. All these things are found in human history, the facts and lessons of which are most surely believed, because coming to us, in spite of such imperfections, accredited by an amount and kind of evidence not short of moral certainty. And even if we regarded the Bible in no higher light than as an historical document, chargeable with the same amount of imperfection, and warranted by the same degree of evidence as human history, we must accept it as an unquestionable record of the mind and will of God. The truth of Christianity is not dependent upon the question of inspiration. What prophets, and apostles, and evangelists have handed down, remains historically true, although we should adopt the lowest view of inspiration, or even deny it altogether.

But while it is important to mark all that is involved in those preliminary propositions which must be settled and accepted on both sides before we are free to enter on the argument as to inspiration, it is no less important to mark the objections that must be set aside, and held to be put out of the way, in accepting these propositions. Nine-tenths of the objections usually brought against the inspiration of Scripture, and the most formidable of their number, are not objections peculiar to inspiration, nor peculiarly strong in their application to it. They are rather difficulties that properly

and primarily apply to those preliminary truths to which we have already referred ; and, if dealt with at all, must in the first instance be dealt with in connection with these truths.

The supernaturalism of the Bible, for example, is an element which makes it chargeable with many objections of a formidable kind ; and these have been pressed into the service of the opponents of inspiration, and eagerly and largely urged against the truth of the doctrine. But it is plain that these objections are applicable not to Inspiration alone, and not to Inspiration in any peculiar degree, but in the first instance to the Bible as itself a supernatural communication from God, and embodying in it many examples of the supernatural ; and are, indeed, equally applicable to it whether the Bible be inspired or not. Such difficulties must be met and answered at the point in the argument where they first occur, and in connection with the truth to which they primarily apply ; they must be settled and solved when charged against the Bible itself as an extraordinary revelation from God rather than against its inspiration ; and if the supernatural character of the revelation is once admitted, the objections must be held as solved or withdrawn.

Again, the historical character of the Bible is of that peculiar kind, that it lays it open to many objections which it is difficult to meet. The range of a narrative that spans a period of four thousand years, and touches on the birth not only of nations but of mankind, and of the world itself,—the variety of its authorship, including many men, in different countries, of different languages, separated by distance of place and long intervals of ages,—the manifold character of its contents, relating to unknown periods of history and conditions of life, to extinct habits of society and modes of thought ;—these and other features of its historical character expose it in a peculiar degree to those accusations which, in a less measure, may be brought against many credible human histories. But when these objections are brought, as they have often been brought, against the inspiration of the Bible, it is a relevant and valid answer to offer, that they apply not

to inspiration in the first instance, but to the Bible itself, whether inspired or not; and that if they cannot be answered, it is not so much the claim to inspiration made by the Bible that is unfounded, but rather that historically the Bible is untrue. Granted the historical veracity of Scripture, as a volume written not by men supernaturally endowed, but by men honest and duly informed, and the objections fall to the ground in the concession.

Once more, the singular, and to many minds the offensive, assumption which the Bible makes to rule the belief and practice of men with an authority from which there is no appeal, exposes it to hostility of yet another but not less formidable kind. To draw the line of demarcation between such a claim and those of the rational and moral nature of man—to define what belongs to the supremacy of the one infallible standard of truth and obligation, and what belongs to the right of private judgment and the duty of personal conviction in all, may be a task in some cases of more than ordinary difficulty; but to lay the responsibility of such difficulties upon the claim of the Bible to inspiration, as if the doctrine were alone answerable for them, is to forget that they are, in the first place, chargeable on the Bible itself, if indeed it contains, in a credible and authentic form, a revelation from God at all. The admission of the prior fact, involves an admission that these objections are unfounded.

Setting out, then, from the admission, as common to both friends and opponents of Inspiration, that we have in the Bible a true history and a supernatural revelation, it is desirable, in order to clear the way for a discussion of the question, to indicate briefly the objections which must be held as foreclosed by the admission. In assuming that this admission is made on both sides, it is not that we would be considered as denying that there are many points involved in it open to dispute, but rather that, in so far as regards the parties with whom we argue, the dispute is settled. Our argument is not with atheists, who deny the existence of God; or with infidels, who deny the truth of the Bible as

embodying a supernatural communication from Him (for with these any controversy about inspiration would be folly before the prior questions were answered), but with those who, conceding both, deny the divine and plenary inspiration of the record. It will greatly facilitate the conduct of the argument, and avoid confusion in it, to mark off at the outset not only the preliminary positions that must be held as proved, but also the preliminary objections that must be held disproved, by both parties.

I. *First*, by those who admit the existence of a supernatural communication, in the right meaning of the terms, the fallacy must also be admitted of the objection, that as the Infinite is incognisable by the finite, it is impossible for God to reproduce in human thought an image, or to embody in human language a true and proper revelation, of Himself. Such an objection, in its full and legitimate meaning, involves a denial of the primary fact that the Bible in any shape contains a representation of God, or a discovery of His nature which answers to the original, face to face, and feature to feature, so as to enable man, in any proper sense, to know God. It would unavoidably lead to the conclusion that the highest effort of human thought, and the best expression of Christian devotion, is to confess 'an unknown and unknowable God.'

It is not necessary for the Christian to deny to philosophy what are its peculiar discoveries in reference to this matter, in order that he may conserve the idea of a proper revelation. It is admitted that the infinite, as belonging to God, and God Himself as infinite, cannot be *directly* known by the mind of man; the knowledge of God is not immediate, but mediate. He is known indirectly, through the medium of the manifestation He has given of Himself. In this respect there is no difference between our knowledge of the infinite and of the finite; between our knowledge of the infinite Being whom we call God, and of the finite beings which we call matter or mind. In neither case is there any peculiar faculty in man that directly perceives and apprehends their essence or proper nature.



Again, it is admitted that God is known only through His *relations* to other existences, and under the conditions of these properties or relations. In this respect also, our knowledge of the infinite and of the finite is alike. They are both known in their relations to the mind that knows them; in their relations to time and space, and other existences with which in various ways, and more or less nearly, they are connected; and our knowledge of them is constituted and conditioned by such properties or relations.

Once more, it is admitted that our knowledge of God is not *commensurate* with the infinitely varied and extensive relations in which He exists, and that our finite conceptions cannot comprehend His infinite nature. But in this respect likewise our knowledge of the infinite and finite resemble each other; for in both it is inadequate and partial, and incommensurate with all their properties or relations. There is indeed no subject of human knowledge, however simple and familiar, that is perfectly known, or that does not branch out into infinity. There is no object of thought that does not, in its relations and properties, exceed the limits of finite knowledge, and that, to be comprehended exhaustively, would not demand an insight that is unbounded. The necessary condition of knowledge in the case of a finite creature, is that it is finite, whether it is knowledge of God or knowledge of the most familiar phenomenon in nature. To comprehend all that can be comprehended of any truth, whether in the world of sense or of thought, would demand the omniscience of God Himself.<sup>1</sup>

But while our knowledge of the infinite as well as of the finite must be incomplete,—apprehending it under a few and not under all its properties and relations,—it is in each case a real knowledge, that has power to appeal both to the understanding and the conscience. It can be apprehended by the mind as real; it can be compared with other truths; it can be reasoned about, and ranged in the classifications of science; it can address the conscience as true; it can be accepted as laying an obligation of duty on the moral nature of man. All human

<sup>1</sup> Birks, *Bible and Modern Thought*, p. 10.

knowledge must be partial in reference to the object known, but it may be true so far as it goes, and therefore real and available for all the purposes for which knowledge is sought after, and truth accepted and believed. Whatever difficulty there may be in our knowledge of a God, because it is partial and incommensurate with His nature, and in a revelation of Him that is not infinite as He is infinite, is a difficulty that is found in all human knowledge in reference to all matters that we know. It may be impossible to reproduce in human thought or human speech an adequate or complete image of God ; it is just as impossible to embody in idea or language a perfect knowledge of another man, or of ourselves. In neither case is our knowledge on that account unreal or untrue.

The difficulty of harmonizing a knowledge of the Infinite One with the finite knowledge alone competent to created intelligence, is precisely parallel to the difficulty of harmonizing the existence of the Infinite One with the existence of the finite creature. Perhaps, if we could trace out the relations of the two truths aright, we would find that the difficulties run into one. There is a difficulty, or rather an impossibility, felt in explaining the truth of a God, Himself infinite and omnipresent, in consistency with the truth of the separate personality of the finite being whom He has made. But no sound or well-ordered mind, under the pressure of such a difficulty, refuses to accept the real existence of either ; not denying, on the one hand, with the atheist, the being of God, nor rejecting, on the other hand, with the pantheist, the personality of the creature. In the same way, there is a difficulty in explaining how a knowledge of the Infinite One is cognisable by the finite creature, without denying the proper nature of the one or other, and making God to be finite, or the creature to be infinite. But it is a difficulty attaching to every case of human knowledge, whether of the finite or infinite, and therefore is not one with which the advocate of revelation is specially concerned. It belongs to a previous and higher question, which must be dealt with before the question of revelation, and still more the

question of inspiration, comes to be discussed. It belongs to the first of all mysteries, the relation of the Creator to the creature. Without waiting to solve such a mystery, it is enough for a Christian's faith to be certified that the knowledge of God revealed in the Bible is the only kind of knowledge competent to man in respect of anything that he knows ; that, although not exhaustive or commensurate with its object, it is precisely similar to what we have of every other fact ; and that, while imperfect in respect of the truth declared, it is yet real and available for all the purposes of truth in connection with men's understanding and consciences.

If revelation tells only in part what God is, the same is true of science when it tells the discoveries of nature, or of observation when it tells of its facts. If the language of revelation feebly and partially represents the mysteries of the Godhead, and is no adequate expression of the divine nature, the case is the same with language, when it unequally reproduces the fulness of truth in any one department of physical or moral investigation. In both cases our knowledge and our speech are imperfect, but in both cases they represent real truth, and not less real because it is truth only in part. The degrees of our knowledge may be more or may be less in different instances ; thought may more completely overtake, and language may more equally image forth, truth in one case than in another ; but in no case, not even in the case of the simplest fact that a child can understand, is knowledge perfect, so that nothing remains unknown. All truth, except intuitive truth, must be apprehended not directly, but indirectly ; all facts, whether of sense or of intelligence, are knowable only under their relations and properties, and must be expressed in relative language ; all human knowledge is knowledge in measure and degree. But the principle that would deny a proper revelation of God in Scripture, because it is a revelation only in part, and would construe its language as an unreal representation of His nature because analogical,<sup>1</sup> is

<sup>1</sup> For a full discussion of Analogy, more especially in its bearings on the Christian argument, I would refer to the masterly and exhaustive

one that must lead to the denial of the reality of all human knowledge, and the rejection of science, whether natural or revealed, as untrue. In this respect, the partial knowledge of the Infinite, and the analogical representation of God objected against in the Christian revelation, stand on exactly the same footing, in respect of the principle involved, as the teaching and the language of ordinary truth.

It were indeed a strange discovery for modern thought to make, that the very God who had made man a rational creature, and competent to know all other truths, should in this act have condemned Himself to be unknown; and that the truth of God is the only truth of which man can have no real knowledge. And it were stranger still, if the reason for the fact be, that God is infinite in power as well as in all perfection; and because He can do everything, cannot do that which His finite creatures can do. Nothing seems to approach nearer to a contradiction in terms, than to affirm that, by reason of the very perfection of His being, the Most High must be less known to men than even His imperfect creatures are known. In entering on any argument as to the inspiration of Scripture, we must hold that a true revelation is a possible and an actual thing; and that it is not out of the power of God to reproduce in the thinking understanding of man, and in his human speech, a proper and real representation of Himself.

II. But there are many who run to the opposite extreme, and contend that the knowledge of God is not only possible, but universal,—that He not only can communicate a proper and adequate knowledge of Himself in an extraordinary and special revelation, but that He has done so to all by means of a spiritual or rational illumination, ordinary and universal as the species. This is a *second* form of objection that must be held as forestalled and set aside by those who admit that the Bible contains a true account of a supernatural revelation given by treatise of my friend and colleague, Dr Buchanan, entitled, ‘Analogy considered as a Guide to Truth, and applied as an Aid to Faith.’

God, and who are prepared to enter on the question of Inspiration.

A revelation given to all by reason, or conscience, or the religious faculty in man, or by all of them conspiring together, is a revelation without miracle. Neither in its own nature, nor in the manner of its communication, does it imply any special interference with the laws of nature, or any departure from the ordinary course of providence. It is a revelation without a prophet speaking by the hand of the Lord upon him. Every man, according to such a religion, is his own prophet, and draws from the treasures of his own rational and moral being, those truths which others believe to come as special gifts from the fulness of the Godhead. It is a revelation without inspiration. It is but one regular and ordinary mode of God's acting on the intelligent and spiritual nature of man, by which He makes it to speak in all alike, and, according to their measure, the only revelation of truth competent to them. It is a revelation that has no alliance with, or embodiment in, historical facts, or times, or persons. The truths it declares, if declared at all, are embodied in inward feelings, or taught in abstract propositions. In all these respects, such a theory is contradictory to the character of that revelation which is given in Scripture.

It is not necessary for the Christian advocate, in affirming the doctrine of a supernatural revelation contained in the Bible, to enter into any minute or doubtful inquiry either as to the existence of certain religious faculties in man, or as to the extent to which, as sources of spiritual truth, they are designed or fitted to contribute to our knowledge of divine things. It would be difficult, and it is not necessary, for him to draw the precise line of demarcation between the truths taught by nature and the truths taught by supernatural revelation in the field of religious knowledge. There *is* a religion of nature, in the proper sense of the term, the importance and value of which it were hardly possible to over-estimate, and which the believer in revelation least of all has any interest or desire to deny. It is important and necessary to him,



above others, as declaring the truths which must be assumed and accepted before supernatural revelation itself were possible or intelligible. But with the source of this natural religion in the human mind, or even the precise amount and extent of its teachings, he is not specially concerned. Whether reason be the only source of the spiritual knowledge competent to nature, or reason and conscience combined,—whether or not there be some special religious faculty, separate altogether from other faculties of our nature, that rises up to gaze face to face upon the infinite, and with intuitive apprehension to lay hold on those spiritual truths of God, and the relations of God to man, which other faculties cannot grasp,—whether or not it is to be called by the name of religious sentiment, or spiritual insight, or religious consciousness, or intuition ;—these are questions with which he is not called upon to deal, and on the answer to which his argument is in no way dependent. Even the exact amount of religious truth contributed by nature, apart from any extraordinary communication from on high, is a point not essential to his case. He is willing to accept all the truths that nature can discover, and all the knowledge it can teach, in addition to supernatural revelation ; and accepting both, he does not feel that he has too much light.

But this one position is essential to the Christian argument and to the believer's faith,—namely, that this spiritual illumination, ordinary and not extraordinary—universal and not special—from within and not from without—natural and not supernatural—this common heritage of truth, to which all are born, and in which all have their needed portion of religious life, is not the exclusive and only communication of divine knowledge which God has given to man. At this point the theory of the Christian and the theory of the Spiritualist diverge, or contradict each other. With the Spiritualist, the universal and absolute religion indigenous to the human spirit is exclusive in its character, anticipating and superseding all those truths necessary to man's duty or hope, which a supernatural religion pretends to teach ; and so making the latter impossible, or if possible, superfluous and vain. With

the Christian apologist, the truths of natural religion are neither so complete in their teaching, nor so certain in the light with which they are taught, as to forestall an extraordinary communication from on high; and more especially, the fact of a natural religion that has its fountain in the moral and spiritual nature of man, is not exclusive of the second fact, that additional to its truths, though not contradictory to them, a special and supernatural revelation of His mind and will has actually been made by God. The question between the two is, in the first instance and chiefly, a question of fact, and must be dealt with, in order to its decision, as other controversies as to facts are decided. The man who believes in a religion of nature, may or may not believe also in a supernatural communication from God; but the man who admits that the Bible is the historical depository of such a communication, must repudiate the claims of this universal religion to be the only proper revelation.

The first and simplest reply, then, to the pretensions of this absolute and universal illumination of truth sufficient for all, and exclusive of any other light, is a direct appeal to the historical evidence which proves that another has been given. Even were it true that the amount of religious knowledge taught by nature, and the clearness and certainty with which it is taught, were all that we needed, it could not affect in any way or put aside the fact, if it be a fact, that a supernatural revelation in addition has been actually vouchsafed. The proof of this is the proper and conclusive fact that settles the controversy. But, over and above this, there are two considerations which bear with decisive effect against the exclusive claims of any native and spiritual faculty in man to supersede supernatural revelation as unnecessary.

In the first place, the history of the world without a supernatural communication from God has signally proved, that the light within, born with man, and more ancient than Christianity, which pretends to have anticipated all the truth that Christianity ever taught, has left men in utter darkness and hopeless depravity. Under its guidance and instruction alone,

they have followed every form of error, but never truth, and practised every kind of worship except the worship of the one only living and true God ; being unanimous in nothing save in their common subjection to moral evil, and in their love of spiritual darkness. The experience of mankind in manifold ways, but with one testimony, declares that this religious faculty which is alleged to have its home in the breast of humanity, either does not exist at all, or is insufficient for its purpose, and has itself been disabled, or turned from good unto evil.

But, in the second place, there is one fact more than any other which demonstrates the insufficiency of natural revelation to be itself a religion to man ; and that is the fact of the entrance of sin into the world, and man's spiritual ruin in consequence. The scheme of those who assert that nature and the truths of nature are complete in themselves, and anticipate all that Christianity has taught or done for man's good, is plainly founded on the principle, unconfessed or avowed, that man has never fallen, and requires no new revelation of truth, and no new provision of mercy, in order to his restoration. It is not only, or mainly, that the moral ruin in which he has been involved through sin, has darkened his understanding and blinded the eye of his spiritual being, so that the truths of God which nature itself teaches are not discerned, and God Himself has become unknown to His fallen creature. Such a darkness demanded indeed a republication, in a clearer and more certain form, of the truths lost, if they were to be available at all. But a fresh revelation of these truths alone would not have availed. In addition, there was a provision of grace unknown to nature that required to be made, and arrangements for securing its object to be executed,—a provision and arrangements which could be carried out only in that new thing which was witnessed on the earth—the incarnation and death and resurrection of the Eternal Son. The doctrine of sin had been embodied and taught in the supernatural facts of the tempter, the temptation, and the transgressor. Parallel to these, the doctrine of salvation had to be embodied

and taught in the great facts acted in the world, of a divine Substitute born into men's place in the family of earth, living under the burden of their sins, dying to make atonement on their behalf, and rising again in their stead as justified. What could nature do to realize such facts, or the light of nature do to teach them? If man was to be divinely taught with that light that could guide his feet in the way of peace, these deeds had to be done upon the earth, and made visible before his eyes, in the shape of historical yet supernatural facts; and after that, a record historical and supernatural too had to be drawn out, to teach them to his children. In addition to the light of unfallen nature or humanity, it is sin that made these facts to be acted, and the record of them to be written.

To accept the Bible as in any form the record of such supernatural discoveries, amounts to a repudiation of the theory of a spiritual illumination native in all, and sufficient for all.

III. But the supernatural facts which form the grand feature of revelation as contained in the Bible, lead to a further conclusion, beyond the simple denial of the sufficiency of nature, either in its provisions or its teachings, for man. The admission of the sacred volume as credible and trustworthy, plainly implies an acknowledgment of the power of God to intervene, and of the fact that He has intervened, in the course of human history in the way of supernatural acts, and no less implies the rejection of all those theories that proceed on the impossibility of miracles. This is the *third* form of objection that must be held as set aside, in the acceptance by any one of the Bible as historically true, and before entering on the question of its inspiration.

The extent to which the miraculous element pervades the language and the thought of Scripture, has already been referred to. It is impossible, by any process of critical division short of dismemberment, to separate between the supernatural and the non-supernatural events of the Bible, or to reject the

one while accepting the other. It is no less impossible to distinguish between the miraculous facts and the dogmatic teaching of Scripture, for they are not only intimately connected, but to a large extent identical. In many cases, the miracles are nothing but doctrines rendered into facts, and the doctrines only miracles interpreted into truths. If the miracles which cluster around the history and emerge in the spiritual truths of the Bible, are, as has been alleged, obstacles to the reception of it as credible, instead of the evidence and confirmation of its credibility, it must nevertheless bear the burden of such a difficulty, because to get rid of them, either from the narrative or the doctrine, would be a difficulty still more formidable. In accepting either its historical truth or its doctrinal teaching, we must accept the difficulties of the supernatural too. And if the miracle be admitted in one case, it is worse than useless to refuse to admit it in all the examples which the Bible records.

It is a wrong position, false both in science and in theology, for any one to occupy, to constitute himself a judge of the times or occasions that demand, on the part of God, the exercise of a power which He admittedly possesses, and has confessedly employed in furtherance of the objects of His grace; or to endeavour to force upon the language of Scripture an impossible sense, in order to be rid of miracles in some portions of the narrative, while in others, not more trustworthy, they are received. The question of how much or how little of the almighty power that is embodied in supernatural acts it is right for God to put forth, or, to speak perhaps more correctly, how often or how seldom He shall put forth exactly the same power, is a question that no wise or reverent man would desire to deal with, after having answered the previous and higher question whether or not such a power belongs to God at all. The admission that miracles are possible with God, once made, and the fact of the occurrence of them, more or less, in the Bible history once granted, a controversy as to their number, carried on in despite of the historical evidence equally applicable to all, would be a specimen of both irrational and



irreverent trifling, even were it not forbidden and foreclosed. It argues a poor idea of what is right in philosophy or advantageous to Christianity, to labour, as if it were a thing greatly to be desired, to reduce by a beggarly percentage the number of miracles which the Bible records, and to count it a triumph for its truth if it is found possible to explain by natural causes, or to interpret away, one or two out of the multitude of its supernatural events. If the Bible be a record of God's actings on the earth in His work of grace, it cannot be subjected to such homœopathic treatment as this. So far as regards the *difficulties of belief*, it is of no moment to Christianity whether the passage of the Red Sea can be explained or not on natural principles, or whether or not the history of Pentecost can be interpreted so as to escape the miracle of tongues. The interpreter who deals in such attempts must go much farther, before he can make plain the way for the belief of a non-supernatural Christianity.

The general question of the possibility of miracles is not without light cast upon it from the actual occurrence of them in the Bible. The history of the Old Testament commences with the first miracle on record—that of creation by a Creator. The history of the New Testament begins with the miracle of the incarnation of the Son of God for the salvation of men. The former of these two is the distinctive article in the creed of the theist, and denied by none but the atheist. The latter of the two is the distinctive article in the creed of the Christian, and denied by none except those who must forfeit that name. Between, or intimately connected with, these two commencing and crowning miracles of the Bible, so strangely like and so strangely unlike, are found arranged all the other miracles on record, deriving from these two an explanation and a meaning which nothing else can furnish. It is not enough to say that the man who, on the authority of the Bible, believes in the creation and the incarnation—that is to say, the man who is not an atheist or an infidel—is bound in consistency to believe on the same authority every other miracle of Scripture. This is true. But much

more than this is implied in those two grand manifestations of almighty power, that stand as sentinels at the commencement and the close of the record of God's supernatural acts upon the earth; and much more that is fitted and intended to cast light on the proper nature and evidential character of miracles.

Take the first miracle of creation, that looks, both in its place in time and in its own character, like the ruling precedent that is to warrant and explain all that succeed; and it is impossible not to see, in the power to which creation is due, an intimation of the source and origin of the rest. Perhaps it is an impropriety in human thought to conceive or speak of one miracle as the product and measure of a power on the part of the Almighty greater than another. Yet, thinking and speaking after the manner of men, it may not be unlawful to say, that no sign, or wonder, or mighty deed performed in this world could be greater than the creation of the world itself; and that no power that was manifested forth in works from heaven wrought in Galilee or Judea could overtop the height, or surpass the strength of that power which in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth, and called all things out of nothing as though they were. Even had we no express ground or warrant in Scripture for saying so, we would have been constrained, when contemplating the mighty works of our Lord, and of those who wielded His delegated power, to say that the source of such a power could be none other than that almighty Fountain of strength to which the Bible traces up creation at the first. None but the man that denied that primeval miracle of old, could deny the existence of a power equal to the occasion of any one of those mighty deeds which the Bible subsequently records.

But more than this. The miracle of creation in the beginning is not only a precedent for every other that succeeds, in respect of a power sufficient for the effect; it is to a large extent the representative of many of those afterwards born in its likeness. There is a resembling type that connects them together, as belonging to the same family of the supernatural,

and due to the same parentage. It is impossible, indeed, not to discern in creation at first, and in some of the subsequent miracles recorded in Scripture, the features of the same worker, and the style and cunning of the same hand. Perhaps there is something in the very nature of the two that of necessity caused this. That one all-embracing and comprehensive work of divine power, the creation of all things in the beginning, according to their goodly and primeval order, must have borne in its bosom the analogies at least to many of the miracles which the Bible records, when the same divine power was put forth to reconstitute and reproduce that order deranged or destroyed by sin. The creation of life at first by the power of God, must have been the type of the supernatural restoration of life when the dead man in after time was quickened by the word of Christ. The power that stilled the waters of the sea of Galilee can hardly fail to find its analogy in that ancient power that appointed to the waves of the sea their peaceful home and their restraining limit in the deep. The hand that created plenty in the desert, and gave the multitudes to eat, was known by its resemblance to that almighty arm that formed of old the tree, and the herb bearing food for man. The order of nature, controlled and governed by miraculous power in multitudes of the works in which Christ showed forth His glory, must have suggested, by a similarity not far to seek, the working of the same power when that order was first appointed and fixed. Both in the power to which it was due, and in the analogies which it embodied, that ancient miracle of creation stands at the very opening of Scripture history as the precedent and representative of all that followed.

There is, in truth, no reasonable or consistent ground on which the deniers of the possibility of the supernatural can find footing, except on the ground which would necessitate the denial of creation too. The atheist, who repudiates the idea of a Creator, is consistent when he repudiates the existence of any power beyond nature, competent to interfere in the way of miracle with its ordinary course. The pan-

theist, who identifies the Creator with the creation, and denies the existence of a personal will superior to the universe which it has made, is also consistent when he denies the possibility of the supernatural. The atheistic materialist, who asserts the eternity of creation and its laws, and sees nothing above or beyond these, is justified in regarding a miracle as an event without a real or adequate cause, and therefore an impossibility. The pantheistic idealist, who denies the distinction between mind and matter, between God and the universe, can in like manner be justified, assuming his own premises, in counting miracles impossible, seeing there is in his view no efficient cause to produce them. But if we assume as a preliminary truth, proved or conceded, that there is a God,—if we further believe that this God is a personal and not an impersonal being, superior to nature and not identified with it, then we have in His will the efficient cause which is competent to produce that event which we call a miracle.<sup>1</sup> Above all, if, by the admission of those with whom we argue, we can assert the fact of creation by a Creator, we have embodied in a sensible example the very supernatural power the possibility of which is called in question.

Perhaps, indeed, there are impossibilities in the nature of things, or contradictions in terms, which God cannot do, and which man cannot believe to be done. If a miracle were one of these, we would be justified in saying that it cannot be. If, for instance, it were an effect without a cause, or, what comes to the same thing, an effect without an adequate cause, the laws of belief in the human mind, intuitive and irresistible, would force us to deny the possibility of it. The definition of a miracle too often adopted, of a violation of the laws of nature, has sometimes given countenance to this idea. If by a violation of the laws of nature is meant that a miracle is a contravention of the principle of cause and effect, or, in other words, a supernatural effect without a supernatural cause, it would indeed run counter to the first principles of

<sup>1</sup> Brown's *Inquiry into the Relation of Cause and Effect*, p. 394. Mansel, *Aids to Faith*, pp. 12-16.

human belief, and be itself an impossibility. *It would not believe* for us. But if we have a supernatural cause adequate and appropriate to the effect in the will of a personal God, independent of nature and superior to it, and that will operating in the midst of the course of material nature in the same manner that the human will operates, we have all that is necessary to render miracles both possible and credible. We have a new cause competent to the new effect, and a supernatural cause competent to the supernatural effect. There may be much that is mysterious about miracles still; but there is nothing that involves a contradiction or an impossibility. The first article in the creed of the theist, which all but the atheist or pantheist profess to believe,—namely, the existence of a Creator,—is sufficient to solve the problem of the possibility of the supernatural. And that article has been translated into fact, and stands at the very threshold of the history of the Bible in the great wonder of creation, in order that, being read and understood, it may introduce and justify all the subsequent wonders that are recorded.

But take next the grand miracle with which the history of the New Testament opens—the miracle of the incarnation of the Son of God in human flesh; and it will be found that it is no less full of instruction as to the object and possibility of miracles. Both the place which it occupies at the close of the long series of supernatural events that run through the Scripture narrative, and its own proper significance, cast light backward on all that have gone before, and seem fitted to sum up the objects and meaning of previous miracles in itself. It crowns the series that reach downward from the beginning of time, and it explains their intent. In that purpose of salvation for sinners which He had prepared from eternity, we can read the mind and meaning of God in the strange and unexampled fact of the incarnation of His own Son: the mysterious fact itself both constitutes and declares the doctrine; and human nature taken up into union with the nature of the Godhead, both reveals the truth and exhibits the example of man redeemed from the fall of sin, and kept



from falling again for ever. It was for this end the Eternal Son of God took upon Him our flesh. And all the signs and wonders that went before,—the miracles of thousands of years, that find their end and crowning manifestation in that most wonderful of all miracles, the union of the divine and human natures in the Saviour, find also their explanation in the divine purpose for which He lived and died. The form of these miracles is different, but their object and intent are the same. The incarnation of the Eternal One would be a wonder more strange than it actually is, and not less incredible than strange, if we could not point, as the explanation of it, to the grand and transcendent purpose which it serves in the revelation of the divine glory in the salvation of sinners. And the miracles which, since the dawn of time, made the earth the theatre of God's mysterious acts, and introduced and heralded the last and most mysterious of them all, would be more incredible still, if we did not know that all of them, even the least, were connected with the end which God had in view from the beginning, and for which, in the fulness of time, His Son consented to become flesh.

Were miracles mere acts of power, unconnected with any moral purpose,—were they objectless, and without some definite and important end in view,—did they square with nothing, and terminate in nothing,—were they wanton and capricious wonders wrought by God in the prodigality of His might, but from no intelligible or influential motive,—they would indeed be burdened with an incredibility which is not chargeable upon them; and there might be some reason to say that they were impossible, because inconsistent with the known character of the Almighty. But the last miracle of Bible history is the key to the former, and proclaims both the object for which they were performed, and the value of that object in the sight of God. The miracle of the incarnation gives at once dignity and moral significance to all the rest. If, for the sake of the salvation of man, it was worthy for the Son of God to live and to die, we need not wonder if, for the same end, and connected with the same plan of God, the supernatural powers

of heaven have been put in motion, and the miracles of a thousand years have been wrought. If there be no impossibility or incredibility in the last sign seen on earth, when a virgin conceived and bare a Son, and His name was Immanuel, God with us, neither can there be any impossibility or incredibility in any one or in all of the signs that preceded or illustrated His advent. May we not go back to the first wonder of all, and say that it was wrought for the sake of the last, and in it found its highest meaning and explanation? Creation was undertaken for Redemption; and redemption, after giving import and glory to all the miracles which accompanied it, has cast its light backward to the dawn of time, and made the morning of creation itself to be bright with a meaning not its own. In the light of such a glorious explanation, all things are possible, and miracles cease to be wondered at. The man who believes that the Bible is true when it tells him of creation in the beginning, and the incarnation in the fulness of time, has a creed large enough to admit within it all the other miracles of God that are found between.

The assertion of the impossibility of the supernatural in any form and for any end, is one that strikes against the doctrine of a revelation not less than of an inspiration. Objections drawn from such a source against the inspiration of Scripture, must be held as unfounded by the man who believes that it contains, in whatever shape, a supernatural message from God.

IV. But the opinion that miracles, even if possible, are not capable of sufficient proof to warrant or require belief, is another fallacy anticipated and foreclosed by the assumption common to the advocates and opponents of inspiration. This is the *fourth* preliminary objection that, before discussing the question, must be set aside by the mutual consent of both.

The inherent incredibility of the supernatural is, in the estimation of many, such as to outweigh all evidence in its favour; or at least it is such as, in the face of whatever amount of testimony, to keep the matter an open question,

and to leave it in that state of doubt which absolves the inquirer from all responsibility or duty to believe. The existence of such a state of feeling, however common, really arises from some confusion of thought as to what is implied in a miracle, and what is the antecedent improbability of its occurrence.

If it be granted that a miracle is not impossible, and that it may occur *as a fact*, then no man can rationally assert or defend the position that it cannot be proved to be a fact, unless on principles that subvert the fundamental laws of human belief.<sup>1</sup> In the first instance, a miracle, if possible at all, is a visible fact that appeals to the senses and understandings of men in the same way as any other outward and sensible fact. That a man, on a certain day and in certain circumstances, rose from the dead, is a fact just as much cognizable by the eyesight and understanding of others, as that the same man, on a certain day and in certain circumstances, died. In this respect, the extraordinary miracle and the ordinary fact are alike. No doubt, in the case of the miraculous event, there is a process of the understanding necessary to enable the witness, on a comparison of the effect with the cause, to say that the latter cannot be natural, and that the former therefore must be supernatural. But not less in the case of the natural event, is there a process of the understanding necessary to enable the witness, on a comparison of the effect with the cause, to say that the latter is natural, and not supernatural, and that the former is of the same character. There is no difference at all between the miracle and the ordinary fact, in so far as regards their being cognizable by the senses and the understanding of the witnesses to them, and the opportunity the witnesses have to be assured that they are true, and not untrue. And, unless it be admitted that the supernatural and the natural fact are in a condition equally capable of proof, it can only be in consequence of some necessity of disbelief in the case of the former, and not in the case of the latter, which forces a man to regard as no fact what is a fact. Such contradiction

<sup>1</sup> Footprints of the Creator, by Hugh Miller, p. 245.

between man's beliefs and the facts to be believed, would amount to nothing less than a subversion, in the particular instance, of the fundamental principles of human belief.

Nor is the case different when an interval more or less wide is interposed between the witnesses whose eyesight beheld the miracle, and the parties to whom it is accredited by their testimony, or more remotely by the testimony of others, who have received it from them. In this case, the link of connection between the miracle and the mind of the persons called to judge of its reality, is ordinary human testimony, resting ultimately on the witness of the eyesight of those who have seen it, and more or less strong and convincing, according to the character and amount of the testimony. The fact that the original spectators saw the supernatural sign, has to be transmitted through the channel of testimony to others, and if transmitted surely and without error, must be sufficient to be the ground of their faith in the sign also. And unless this fact—that the spectators have seen and believed the miracle which they certify—can be certainly conveyed by testimony to the minds of others at a distance, so that they shall be warranted to believe it to be true, it comes only to this, that in the case of supernatural facts, but in the case of no other facts, testimony is necessitated to fail in its witness, and to lead men into the belief that *that* is not a reality which is one. Such a disability found in human testimony to transmit aright from one man to another supernatural facts, and these alone, would amount to some original mal-arrangement or subsequent failure in our faculties fatal to belief.

It is not sufficient, in answer to such an argument, to distinguish between the belief of the original witnesses and the facts they believe, and to say that testimony is able to establish the belief, but not able to establish the facts. The two indeed are to be distinguished, but not put into contradiction to each other. If the belief of eye-witnesses is not in harmony with the facts they see,—if, in the case of miraculous facts, and these alone, there be a uniform discordance between

them, so that the belief does not answer to the fact, and prove it to be true, it is merely throwing back the difficulty on the original spectators, and asserting that they were forced to see as unreal what was a reality. But if neither in the case of the men who saw the miracle there be any necessity laid upon them to see it as none, nor in the case of the men who report the miracle to others there be any disability laid upon them to report it aright, then it is impossible, without a subversion of the laws of evidence and human belief, to maintain that testimony can in no case establish a supernatural fact. To assert such a proposition would be equivalent to saying that, in connection with that class of facts, there was some mysterious necessity imposed upon man's eyesight, or man's understanding, or man's speech, to see, or believe, or report that to be untrue which was true.

What is the antecedent improbability that justly attaches to the idea of a miracle? Setting aside for the present all analogies or precedents that might tell either for or against it, the antecedent improbability of the miracle is nothing more and nothing else than the uncommonness of the miracle. It is very uncommon, and therefore it is very improbable. By the proper idea or definition of it, it is an event out of the usual course of nature; it is different from all observation and experience, except in the case of like supernatural occurrences; we are not compelled to say that it is contrary to all human testimony (for that would be a mere begging of the question), but we are required to say that it is contrary to all testimony, except in the exceptional and infrequent cases in which similar facts have been alleged. But, apart from these cases, and apart from analogies for or against it, the measure of probability of the miracle is, to express it in the language of exact science, the number of times in which a miracle has occurred in certain given circumstances, as compared with the whole number of times in which these circumstances have been observed; or, to reverse the statement, the improbability of the miracle is represented by the vast number of times in which the circumstances have happened,



as contrasted with the very small number of times in which they have been connected with the supernatural. No doubt the resulting number would express a very high improbability indeed. But, unless the number were *infinite*, it would not, according to any proper calculation of probabilities, show the miracle to be impossible, or incapable of proof.<sup>1</sup>

The same principles apply to the credibility of human testimony to be weighed in favour of the miracle. The comparative credibility of human testimony in any given circumstances, is to be estimated according to the number of instances in which such testimony has been found to be true, as compared with the number of instances in which it has been given under the same conditions. Setting aside all analogies, this, weighed against the uncommonness of the supernatural, will bring out the proper statement of the case as between the truth or falsehood of the miracle alleged. It is very plain that there may be cases in which, looking to the number and character of the witnesses, and the circumstances of their testimony, the evidence that they bear will amount to a moral certainty. The facts of history, which no one, with his mind reasonable and reasonably informed, pretends to doubt,—the experience of the daily transactions of the world, in which men are seen to peril life and hope on nothing but the witness of their fellow-men, unanswerably show that human testimony, in certain circumstances, forms a ground of belief not short of absolute and perfect moral assurance. And looking, on the one hand, at the improbability of miracles considered in themselves, and, on the other hand, at the credibility of human testimony in certain well-understood circumstances, it is impossible not to believe that, in some cases, it is more likely that the miracles are true than that the testimony is false.

But there are analogies on both sides to be taken into account in this matter, apart from the probability or improbability of the miracle in itself, measured by its comparative

<sup>1</sup> La Place : *Essai Philosophique sur les Probabilités*, p. 7. Playfair's Works, vol. iv. pp. 427-449.

commonness or uncommonness. Looking at the miracle as an outward and sensible fact, finding its place among the natural effects which we see daily to be wrought around us, it has certain analogies to these, of a marked and intimate kind. But looking at the miracle as an event, the effect not of a natural but of a supernatural cause, analogy runs counter to it, and to that extent adds to the improbability of its occurrence. Certain analogies of the material world combine beforehand in declaring the improbability of the occurrence of any sensible effect finding its place among the visible facts around us, except from a sensible and visible cause, similar to those with which we are familiar.

There are analogies, however, on the other side, which not only neutralize these adverse presumptions, but turn the scale in the opposite direction. If we take the miracle away from the level of material and sensible analogies, and elevate it to the platform of the supersensible, and especially to the spiritual analogies that bear upon it, we shall find that the evidence from analogy is all the other way.

First of all, in the supersensible world we have, in the existence of the human *will*, and in the influence of that unseen agent among the seen causes and effects of the material world, the exact counterpart of the working of that invisible God who Himself, in a region beyond the reach of human observation, yet works among the observed phenomena of nature,—the supernatural cause of those visible and historical facts which, because of their superhuman origin, we call miracles. Side by side with those sensible and material causes which the eye takes knowledge of in the familiar production of sensible effects, we find the will of man among them, but not of them, the unseen but efficient cause of palpable and outward results which mere physical causes cannot explain. A remnant of the image of God, the will of man works in this respect like the will of God, a supersensible cause producing sensible effects, and not, in doing so, running counter to natural or material laws, but having its place and influence among them, although markedly dif-

ferent from them. The action of the human will in these outward and sensible effects we do not call supernatural, because it has been made to find its place in harmony with nature around it ; but its supersensible influence and results in the world of matter form the closest of all analogies to the like action of God in supernatural works, and warrant us to reason from the one to the other.

Next, in the spiritual world there are analogies of a very strong and intimate kind, that lend their confirmation to the evidence we have in favour of the Scripture miracles, and not only neutralize the improbability of the supernatural, looking at it merely as a fact of experience, but render it actually probable, looking at it in its connection with spiritual things. That first and stupendous miracle of creation out of nothing by God, incomprehensible in its greatness to the feeble understanding, and well-nigh incredible in its mysteries, finds the only light or explanation that can be cast upon it in the purpose of God for which it was undertaken, as a manifestation of His own glory, and a means of imparting of His own blessedness to creatures; first in their unfallen, and then in their fallen state. The moral purposes which it serves throw light upon the material wonder, and explain it ; and that long series of miracles wrought upon the earth for thousands of years, strangely parallel in their style and features, their authorship and end, to the first miracle of creation, find their explanation, and are redeemed from all improbability, by a like connection with the purposes of God in His moral administration. The analogy of creation by the unseen hand that created, in order to effect the designs of God in His spiritual economy, lends strong and available confirmation to the miracles of Scripture, all wrought by the same unseen power, and for the same high ends. It is a precedent for all the rest.

But the analogy of creation is not exhausted in the one act of power which made all things out of nothing. If the teachings of science are to be received, the work of creation has been renewed again and again upon the earth, and the

material system around us has repeatedly, and according to some systematic plan which we imperfectly understand, suffered interferences from a supernatural source. The word of the Lord has been upon the earth, not once, but frequently, in the creations of new life and fresh forms of existence, affording clear and varied illustration of the fact, that the material system is servant to the moral; and that to fulfil God's designs, whether of goodness or of grace, the order and laws of the former must be made subservient to the interests of the latter. The analogies of creation at first, and of the repeated interventions of God upon the earth, in the way of the introduction of new types of being, must teach the principle of the divine government in regard to miracles, if we would understand them aright; leading us to see that those supernatural departures from the ordinary course of the material system, are but harmonies in a plan designed to carry out the purposes of a higher. It is not strange that the lower should be made to give way to the higher law—the material to the spiritual economy: it would rather be strange if it were otherwise, and if the interests of a nobler system were sacrificed to maintain a mechanical uniformity in the inferior.

There may be an inherent improbability in miracles, considered simply in themselves, as wonders of power, or considered in the light of those lower analogies of the material system, which take hold upon them as physical phenomena. But theirs is a double nature—a spiritual as well as an earthly; and we have only to lift them up to the level of the higher nature that belongs to them as agents in the spiritual government of God, for the purpose of advancing His work of redemption, and the improbability vanishes, and the analogies point in the other way. They were from the beginning, and all along their history, necessary parts in the development of that promise of grace which was to be fulfilled though heaven and earth should pass away; and it is not surprising that the settled ordinances of Heaven worked by unwonted combinations to the accomplishment of the end. Miracles are not incapable of proof. The very highest reasons conceivable in

the universe of God demanded their occurrence. And as we have, in the infinite power of the Godhead, a cause adequate to effect them, so we have, in the riches of His mercy, and in the wisdom which sought the ends of His mercy, a reason sufficient for their performance. Miracles are made possible by the power of God; they are made probable by the analogy of His goodness.

The credibility of miracles is a preliminary axiom that must be assumed in any discussion as to the inspiration of Scripture, and is, in fact, involved in the reception by any one of the Scripture as containing a message from God. Objections having their origin and strength in the theory that the reality of the supernatural cannot be fully established, or must remain an open question, are not, in such an inquiry, to be discussed, but rather dismissed.

V. Closely allied to the denial of the possibility or the credibility of miracles, and often connected with it, is the theory that ascribes the narrative of supernatural facts found in Scripture to a mythical origin. This theory not only rejects the miracles of Scripture, denying both its supernatural character and contents, but also rejects its proper historical veracity as a credible and authentic narrative. This is the *fifth* form of objection that must be assumed as set aside by those who receive the Bible as divinely given, and credible as a human history, and must be regarded as disposed of before dealing with its inspiration.

The history found in Scripture is without its parallel in other books,—spanning a course of time which no other narrative embraces, reaching up to an antiquity which no other annals attain, and comprising a variety and extent of subjects which no other history touches upon. The range, both in time and space, of Bible history is something that remarkably distinguishes it from all profane annals; its narrative of persons and events runs parallel with uninspired narratives through the historic age, and during the rise, progress, and fall of some of the greatest kingdoms of the ancient earth;



but it also leaves them far behind, and stretches upward to a date when we have no contemporary monuments with which to compare it, and during ages which uninspired writers leave untouched, because heroic, and known only by tradition and legend. In those times when nations were born, and when national history, written by profane authors, loses itself in fable, and its persons and events mingle with mythology, the history of the Bible records its occurrences with an accuracy of outline and detail found only in contemporary annals, and stands by itself our solitary guide during the pre-historic ages, and amidst the beginnings of our race. In such circumstances it is not wonderful, that when the Bible joins the supernatural with the natural in its pages, there should have been found interpreters who, themselves denying its divine character, should have dealt with the histories of the Old Testament as they deal with the early histories of Greece and Rome, when they record a mythology instead of, or interspersed with, historical persons and events. The expedient, indeed, was an obvious and ready one to men unwilling to bring against the writers of Scripture the odious charge of intentional falsehood and conscious fraud, but yet willing, by one method or another, to get rid of the supernatural in the Scripture record.

The mythical theory, first applied to the Old Testament, could not sufficiently accomplish its object until made applicable to the New Testament also; and accordingly its history, in so far as it embodies the supernatural, has been made, notwithstanding its recent date in the midst of the historic period, and its intense aspect of reality, by the help of the same critical methods, to dissolve into a myth. The only difference between the mythical theory and the infidelity of an older school, is not in so far as regards its result of subverting the divine authority and character of Christianity, but rather in the method by which the result is reached. By the unbelievers of a former age the characters of both Scripture and the authors of Scripture were sacrificed equally; by the advocates of the mythical theory, the charge of falsehood is turned away

from the writers in order that it may, as is believed, be more warrantably brought home to what they wrote.

There are two things, however, which must be taken for granted or proved before the mythical theory can be accepted, or even any attempt made to apply it to the interpretation of the sacred volume, for the purpose of ascertaining what it really contains.

First of all, it must be assumed that the supernatural cannot or does not exist in revelation ; for if this is not assumed, there are no grounds whatever for asserting that the record of miracle and divine intervention in Scripture is no more than a mythology. If, indeed, the author of the Pentateuch had no supernatural revelation when he wrote his narrative of creation in the beginning, or even gave us in detail the book of the generations of Adam, it must have been a mere mythology, on the supposition that it was not a deliberate and intentional fraud. But if it be admitted that he received from God a supernatural communication of things unknown to man, and was instructed from above, both in what God did in the beginning, and in what was the early and unrecorded history of our race, there is no ground at all for pretending that the character of the facts themselves, or the manner of recording them, marks them out as mythical. The first question to be determined, and the determination of which to a large extent governs the rest, is whether a supernatural revelation be possible ; and if so, whether the historian of Genesis actually enjoyed one in the writings that he has left. The canon laid down by Strauss, at the commencement of his elaborate work, as to the impossibility of the supernatural, is an assumption of the very point that ought to have been proved before proceeding to attempt a mythical interpretation of Scripture. If the supernatural, and especially a supernatural revelation, be not impossible, there is no difficulty in the narratives of Scripture, so far as these are supernatural, and no room, therefore, for the introduction of the mythical principle in interpreting its contents.

Secondly, the historical character of Scripture, as a narra-

tive credible and authentic, must also be denied before the mythical theory can be accepted ; for if it is not, the theory is impossible. In so far as regards the New Testament narrative, contemporaneous with the events recorded, this is obvious. If the histories of the evangelists were written by the parties to whom they are usually ascribed, and at the dates when they are generally supposed to have been penned, then it is impossible to imagine that they contain the narrative of facts which are not facts, but fictions. Both the character of the writers and the publication of the histories immediately after the events occurred, afford a complete guarantee that the histories are true. Nothing but a mythological mania, that had disturbed the understandings both of the writers and the readers of the narrative, could explain the belief of both that the occurrences were real, if they were nothing but myths.

In the case of some of the Old Testament histories not contemporary with the events narrated, we have not indeed the same guarantee arising from the publication of the history immediately after the occurrence of the events, and while the witnesses to them were alive. But we have in favour of them that general historical evidence, upon which a great part of profane history is received as true,—namely, the trustworthiness of the narrator, as a witness both honest and sufficiently informed. The history of the creation, and of the beginning of man on the earth, was not written, indeed, by a contemporary witness, nor published at the time ; but neither was it written unaided, from distant and imperfect traditions, handed down from one generation to another, and both impaired and corrupted at every step in the transmission. If a divine revelation in the case is admitted at all, we have in that revelation a source of knowledge open to the historian of Genesis not less authentic and credible than contemporary witnesses, or even his own personal observation, and one that thoroughly qualified him to speak as a trustworthy historian, and to speak what he knew. A supernatural communication of facts and truth from God must be held as more than sufficient as a source of information

to supply the place of ordinary personal or contemporary acquaintance with what he records ; so that, writing or speaking at the distance of thousands of years from the events, he was able as truly to narrate them as if they had been events of his own day. Whether it be, then, the narrative of contemporary occurrences or not, we have the most complete guarantee for the perfect knowledge of them on the part of the authors. If they were honest historians, they were competently informed as to what they embody in their narratives ; and the historical veracity of their writings, if conceded, shuts out the possibility of the mythical theory.

Apart, then, from many considerations of a less direct kind, fatal to the mythical hypothesis, the primary questions to be determined in connection with it are these : Whether or not, in the first place, we have in the Bible a supernatural revelation of God's acts and mind ; and if so, whether or not, in the second place, the Bible is a credible history of that revelation. These two questions must be answered, one way or other, before we can be called upon to deal with the mythical system of interpreting Scripture. If they are answered in the affirmative,—if it be the case that the Bible contains a supernatural communication ; and if it be the case, also, that, apart from its inspiration, the history of the communication is trustworthy, then the mythical principle is set aside by anticipation.

We may be justified in applying the principle to profane history, to help us in the interpretation of it, and to guide us in separating between the narrative of its historic and its unhistoric events. It may be possible and warrantable, by its aid, to sift out the supernatural from the real in the human and uninspired record, without being obliged to deny the general historic character of the narrative. But if, in addition to its historic character, there be in the Bible also a supernatural element, this admission forbids the treatment of miracles as mythical, and explains their consistency with the proper historic character of the record in which they are found. We may be justified and required to interpret as mythical, and to reject the proper historical character of

those portions of the earlier narrative of Livy which tell of the portents and wonders of the heroic age, because his history has no privilege of a supernatural origin or character belonging to it, to cover or explain such occurrences. But we are not permitted or required to apply the same principles of interpretation to the Bible in its narrative of the miraculous, because, in addition to its proper historical character, it is distinguished from other histories by the fact of its supernatural origin and contents. First of all, and as really decisive of the controversy as to the mythical principle in its application to the sacred volume, we must decide, yea or nay, as to its supernatural character and its historical veracity.

VI. If these points are believed to be settled,—if the Bible contains a supernatural revelation in a form authentic and credible, viewing it merely as a human history, there is no room for the theory of mythics in connection with it. Any objections derived from such a source must be held as fore-stalled in entering on the discussion about inspiration.

In setting aside the mythical principle as inconsistent with the admission of the supernatural in Scripture, or of Scripture itself as merely a trustworthy human narrative, we in so far conserve its proper historical veracity. But another preliminary source of objection must be held as no less repudiated by both the friends and opponents of inspiration, if they would start from the admissions common to both. Difficulties, historical or otherwise, arising out of our ignorance, and of a kind which may be, and are, found in the writings of profane authors, trustworthy as writers, must be held as repudiated by the preliminary concessions of all who receive the Bible as a true depository of a message from God. This is the *sixth* form of objection to be considered by friends and opponents as put out of the way before entering on the discussion of inspiration.

Whether we regard the Bible as a trustworthy history of God's movements upon this earth since the first, or as a discovery to us of supernatural truth or of religious duty,



in either aspect it is plain, from the peculiar character that belongs to it, that it must be especially open to objections arising out of our limited and defective knowledge. It is a most important question in apologetical theology generally, as well as in respect particularly to the historical veracity of Scripture, to inquire to what extent such difficulties ought to be allowed to influence us in receiving or rejecting it; what is the proper place that they occupy, and the true weight due to them, as contrasted with the evidence in favour of Scripture as the credible record of a communication from God.

As a history peculiar in its character, and remarkably distinguished from any other ever written, Scripture suggests or raises a multitude of questions, historical, geographical, chronological, far beyond those forced upon us by other histories,—questions to which no full or satisfactory answer can be given. As a history, the beginnings of which are lost in the remoteness of antiquity, beyond the date of other or parallel monuments, and whose range gathers within it times and places, persons and events, the most distinct and dissimilar,—which combines into one narrative the men and the deeds of ages with a thousand years between, and of nations contrasted by geographical position, by language, by traditions and habits of society,—which condenses into one volume the history of the world for hundreds of generations, and yet deals in details appropriate rather to biography than universal history,—as a book recording all that we ever can know of bygone days, with extinct modes of life and speech, of opinion and belief, it is impossible but that it should be open to questions which no human ingenuity can pretend to answer, in a measure and variety for which there is no room in the case of any other book. There must be unrecorded facts in a history at once so extensive and condensed, and unexplained circumstances as to times and places, and persons and occurrences, in a selection of materials where a few are chosen and many left, and things unmentioned far beyond the number of others that are, and yet the key to the right understanding of the latter; which, because wanting, leave an appearance of darkness, or even

contradiction and incredibility, upon the narrative, and which, if supplied, would clear all the difficulty away. If we are to have a history framed upon the scale and model on which the Bible history is framed, and selected upon the principles after which it has been selected, following the footsteps of God as He walks on the earth, and leaving untold all besides, touching upon events, one or two in a thousand, and silent on all the rest, we must have, along with this, historical difficulties and apparent discrepancies much beyond what other narratives exhibit.

In like manner, if we look at the Bible not so much in its historical aspect as in its character of a record of supernatural truth given to man, we will find that, in comparison with other books, it must, from its very nature, be exposed to the charge of being crowded with difficulties and perplexities which no other book exhibits. The supernatural element that belongs to it, gives to it a darkness as well as a glory that no human book has. If it be, or if it contain, the revelation of the infinite God to His finite creatures, in any form and to any extent, there must be mysteries attaching to it which no human intellect can solve, and which, if solved, would prove that it was not a revelation of the infinite at all. The necessary condition on which a discovery of God or of His mind and acts is a possible thing to understandings limited and defective like ours, is, that it be a discovery made dark even by its own light, so that if we know God at all, we shall know Him only in part. A revelation of the Most High without mystery is simply an impossibility; and if the Bible were free from those intellectual difficulties that beset it, and from truths reaching high above our understanding, and propositions approaching as nearly as possible to contradiction without actually contradicting each other, it would amount to an antecedent probability that the Bible was not from God. Yet what we cannot explain in its truths may be capable of explanation; and what in our view look like contradictory propositions, may be no contradiction at all. The missing link unknown or unintelligible to us, if supplied, may bind into one, truths that seemed to be twain: and the explanation that

for the present we cannot reach, if given, might harmonize what is now incapable of reconciliation. If we are to have a supernatural revelation of divine truth, we must accept it on the condition of mysteries and difficulties a thousandfold more in number and greater in degree than can possibly, with all their perplexities, attach to the discoveries of human truth. Nature has enough of mysteries of her own which the student of nature vainly attempts to solve. The supernatural has its mysteries greater and more numerous still.

Once more, if we look at the Bible as a revelation of duties, new and different in their bearings from those which nature or conscience imposes, we shall have occasion no less certainly to confess that it is full of difficulties more and greater than those of any other book. As a revelation to our moral nature as certainly as to our intellectual, it is open to objections which we cannot in all cases pretend to answer, and yet which we can as little suppose are incapable of being answered. Our moral relations to that perfect Being whose character and ways the Bible professes to make known, are indeed of the same nature as those between ourselves and our fellow-creatures. Duty to God is the same in kind as duty to our fellow-man, to whom duty may be owing. Truth and love and righteousness due to heaven, are not different obligations from the morality owned on earth. But while the nature and principles of this morality are identical, yet the objects to which it is directed are different; and the difference between them is so transcendently great, that it is impossible that our finite minds, apart from His own teachings, can understand all that is implied in our moral relations to God, or all that is consistent or inconsistent with these.

The mystery that must ever attach to God Himself, and even to His moral relations to His creatures, is a mystery that forbids us, without His express revelation, from adequately understanding all our obligations, or accurately drawing always the line that divides between right and wrong in reference to Him. In the moral discovery that we have of duty as well as the intellectual discovery that we have of truth in the

Bible, there will be many things hard to be understood, and difficult to reconcile with the apprehensions beforehand of our moral and rational nature. A deeper and truer insight into the character of God, and a complete and clear explanation of His spiritual relations to ourselves and others, would, were it competent to us in our present state, remove such difficulties where they are not indeed caused by the depravation of our own nature. The morality of the Bible would be cleared from objections, just as entirely as its truths would be cleared from doubt, were full light, moral and intellectual, shed down upon ourselves. Apart from those difficulties that arise from the perversion to evil of our own nature, such a light, at present withheld, would explain them all. But if the Scriptures contain a revelation of duty owing by us to that infinite Being who is the eternal fountain of duty to all, there must be to us now a mystery in it inseparable from our relations to Him: the ethics of the Bible will have in them difficulties which, to explain aright, must be beyond the power of our understanding; and its supernatural morality, dealing with duties new and different in their objects, no less than its supernatural truth, revealing the new and different objects themselves, will be open to questions which, if it were not supernatural, would not find place.

There is one answer to be given to all these three kinds of objections attaching to the Bible, whether historical, or intellectual, or moral, which, if it does not remove the difficulty in whole, is yet sufficient to set aside the objection as one against the credibility of Scripture. The objections are or may be due to our ignorance. The missing fact, unrecorded and unthought of, when inserted into its proper place in the course of events that are recorded, will be seen to harmonize the statements that without it looked hostile to each other, and to reproduce consistency amid apparent contradiction, and to bind into well-sustained continuity chronological anachronisms, and to dissolve geographical difficulties, and to reduce into order the broken unity of historical details. A sufficient knowledge, could it be ministered to minds themselves defective, would

cast light on the mysteries of supernatural truth in such a manner and degree, that if it did not remove all difficulties, would at least prove that they are not insoluble; and if it did not make all mysteries plain, would at least be an earnest of the promise, They shall know who follow on to know. A fuller revelation of the moral character of God, and of His relation to His creatures, at present denied, because perhaps at present impossible to sinners, would pour such an explanation over the problems of good and evil, of right and wrong in His general government and in His dealings with man, as to deliver the morality of the Bible from all possibility of misapprehension or doubt, except what came from our own perverted nature. The objections drawn from the historical discrepancies, the intellectual difficulties, the moral mysteries found in the Bible, *are*, at least *may be*, difficulties founded on our own ignorance.

In the case of the historical discrepancies, the progress of time and of theological investigation have made many of them, formerly in appearance the most formidable, to disappear. In the department of the intellectual difficulties, a truer estimate of the limits of the human understanding, and a more modest spirit of inquiry, have taught in many matters the necessity of believing when it is impossible to explain the truths that are believed. And in reference to the morality of Scripture, not a few in recent times who disown its supernatural claims, are forward to do homage to its spiritual teachings. What has happened confessedly in regard to many difficulties, historical, doctrinal, and moral, in the past, gives us warrant to believe, that whatever difficulties remain, are capable of the same satisfactory treatment; and may either be explained away or shown to be necessary, and because of the very nature of the truths revealed, inseparable from a supernatural revelation.

The objections against the credibility of the Bible, founded upon the difficulties connected with its historical contents, its doctrinal discoveries, its moral teachings, are, many of them, no more than what must attach to the sacred volume, if it be what it professes to be, and in point of fact are no proper



objections at all, so long as it is possible, by a hypothetical assumption not itself impossible, to reconcile the discrepancy or explain the intellectual or moral difficulty. It is not essential to the explanation to establish, as a matter of fact, the unrecorded circumstance that is to harmonize two conflicting statements, or the unrevealed truth that is to reduce to consistency with each other two apparently irreconcilable doctrines. It is enough if the fact be not inadmissible in itself, and the truth not inconsistent with Scripture. The very possibility that, within the brief compass of the historical narrative of Scripture, the fact supposed to be omitted may find a place and supplement in such a way as to reconcile the discrepancies of the history ; or the possibility that, in the incompleteness of a revelation given only in part, the truth assumed may be admissible, and, if admitted, may join into one the conflicting doctrines, is itself sufficient to put to silence the objection.

If, indeed, the historical discrepancy amounted to a real contradiction,—if the two doctrines were not only unreconciled, but irreconcilable,—if the moral teaching were not only unknown to conscience, but opposed directly to its fundamental dictates on vital questions of right and wrong, then, indeed, any attempt to conserve the veracity of Scripture were hopeless. It is impossible to believe what is a contradiction in terms, or what is directly opposed to the primary intuitions of our rational and moral nature. There must always be a negative office conceded to reason and conscience in dealing with an alleged revelation, even in regard to its teachings : the negative office of rejecting as untrue what is either a proved contradiction in itself, or a proved contradiction to the fundamental principles of our rational and moral being. No amount of evidence would suffice to warrant such doctrines, or render belief possible. But there may be much divergence and discrepancy in historical statement when there is no contradiction ; and many truths, intellectual and moral, unknown to reason and conscience, but not in opposition to, or irreconcilable with, them. And in regard to these, whatever mystery or improbability they present, it is

enough to meet the case if it be not impossible to refer them to our ignorance,—if it is not out of our power to allege that fuller information would harmonize what is apparently inconsistent with itself, or in contrariety to acknowledged facts or truths; and that, in a matter only partially known to us, and in regard to which perfect knowledge is impossible, it is more likely that we are ignorant of the true explanation than that the difficulty cannot be explained.

Butler long ago drew the distinction between objections to the *evidences* of the Bible as a supernatural revelation, and objections to the *form* or *contents* of the Bible as recording and embodying it.<sup>1</sup> While he admitted that the former were deserving of all proper inquiry and consideration, he pronounced the latter to be unworthy of attention. The distinction is both obvious and important. In dealing with the evidences for the Bible, we are dealing with a matter on which we are competent to judge, because the principles and methods of proof applied to the Bible are familiar to us, as entering into our calculations and judgments in connection with our daily beliefs and conduct. But in dealing with the historical form or doctrinal contents of Scripture, we are entirely incompetent to judge, having no antecedent principles or methods familiar to us, and enabling us to say how God will put on record a supernatural revelation from Himself, or what it shall contain. Objections drawn from the historical character of the record, in its omissions or apparent incompleteness, or partial disclosures of things recorded; or, still more, objections drawn from the difficulty and mystery of the truths revealed in it, are drawn from a province in which it is not competent for man to enter as a judge, and still less as an objector.

Within that province he is, and of necessity must be, profoundly ignorant, and indeed incapable of being perfectly informed. By reason of his very ignorance, it is impossible for him to prove that his objections are well-founded, and might not, even in his estimation, be removed, if only a

<sup>1</sup> Analogy, Part ii. chap. 3.

little more of a light now denied to him were vouchsafed. They are founded on his want of knowledge, not on his knowledge, of what a full and perfect revelation might be, and of how it might supplement the incompleteness and explain the difficulties of one confessedly partial and partially recorded. The evidences that we have in favour of the credibility of the Bible are of a kind familiar to us, and on which men are accustomed to judge and act every day. The objections to be set over against those arising from its historical or doctrinal difficulties come from a quarter in which we are utterly strangers, and have no knowledge to guide us. The evidence is founded on what we do know. The difficulties, for aught we can tell, may rest only on what we do not know. In the face of the manifold proofs of the credibility of Scripture, all that can be set up against it is the likelihood that what, with our imperfect faculties and still more imperfect knowledge, we cannot explain, is itself untrue.

Difficulties, whether with respect to historical details or dogmatic and moral truths, which may possibly be founded on our own ignorance, and which it is impossible to prove are not, must be counted as forestalled and set aside by those who accept the Bible as being a trustworthy record of a revelation from God. Objections coming from such a source, whatever they may amount to, and in whatever shape they offer themselves, cannot require to be weighed or judged afresh when dealing with the discussion as to inspiration.

VII. Intimately connected with a Bible as the depository of a revelation from God, is the idea of a source of truth not from within, but from without, and an authority for man, external to himself, but binding on his understanding and conscience. Difficulties founded on such an idea are frequently urged as an argument against the theory of an inspired Bible, but more properly and primarily belong to a Bible containing, in any shape, a supernatural revelation, and whether it be inspired or not. They form *the seventh* class of those objections that, by mutual admission of friends and opponents of in-

spiration, must be held as disposed of before entering on the discussion of it.

There are indeed truths of a moral and spiritual kind, accepted on the ground of internal and not external proof, for reasons inherent in, or deducible from, the truths themselves, and not foreign to them: they are seen and known and believed in their own light, and not because of borrowed evidence; they are held to be true in consequence of their own proper character and meaning, and not in consequence of support lent to them from other quarters. And because there are such truths, having their witness in themselves, and not in another, it has been confidently asserted that a revelation from without of moral and spiritual things is impossible; that if they are known at all, they must be known in the light that they themselves supply, and in their native evidence recognised by the mind that believes; and that any foreign, and especially any authoritative, source of spiritual teaching, apart from those inherent tendencies in the mind which result in certain ideas and feelings of a spiritual kind, is inconsistent with both the nature of those truths and the proper character of human belief.

In dealing with such an idea, it is necessary to recall to mind the common and generally accepted distinction between truths of reason and truths of faith. The former are believed either as self-evident propositions, or upon grounds connected with the truths themselves. The latter are believed for reasons foreign to any self-evidencing power in themselves, or any deductions from other self-evident truths, and simply on the ground of testimony. It is to this latter class that the teachings of revelation belong. The truths which it declares, whether in the shape of historical facts or dogmatic doctrines, or moral and spiritual revelations, rest their claim on our belief in the first instance on the ground of testimony. It is the evidence appropriate and sufficient for these truths. It is impossible to assert that an external revelation cannot present such truths to the mind with the same clearness that other truths are presented, so as to secure for them at least that

they shall be intelligently understood. And if it be alleged that the evidence of testimony is in no case sufficient, in the instance of moral or spiritual truths, to carry them beyond the stage of being understood, into the position of being believed also, it must amount to an assertion that testimony can never form a certain ground of belief in any case and with respect to any truth. There is nothing in the difference between historical facts or dogmatic doctrines on the one hand, and moral and spiritual truths on the other, that can justify us in saying that the testimony which is enough to accredit the one, and impose on us the duty to believe, is incapable of accrediting the other, and leaves us at liberty to disown them. In the instance of many of the statements of Scripture, there is no reason or ground in the facts stated, if they be historical, or in the doctrines if they be dogmatic, any more than in the moral and spiritual truths, to believe them for their own sakes, or in the light of their own internal evidence; and if accepted at all, they must be accepted for no other reason whatever than just because of the testimony that affirms them both. It is impossible, with any consistency or pretence of reason, to receive that testimony as in the one case sufficient, and in the other insufficient; or to say that the discovery of fact or doctrine in Scripture is a true revelation, while the discovery of moral and spiritual truth is not.

Amid the multitude and variety of those relations that subsist between the Creator and the creature, each of them teaching new wisdom and duty, it is impossible, with any pretence of reason, to allege that there are none unknown to reason or conscience in itself; and that a revelation of moral and spiritual truths is impossible because there is none to reveal. As little can it be alleged that, with respect to the truth or falsehood of such a revelation, its felt and at once confessed adaptation to the moral nature of man is the proper or only test. There are truths which, in their moral character and aspects, when fully understood, commend themselves to the conscience as true. There are alleged truths, again, which, when presented to the moral nature, prove themselves, by their



malign nature and results, to be certainly false. But between these two extremes there are a multitude of moral truths unknown to the conscience and understanding until presented from abroad, in regard to which it requires the teaching and training of knowledge and experience before their real adaptation to man's nature is recognised, and their obligation seen and felt, and their truth proved by the self-witnessing power that is in them. To make the conscience of fallen man, uninstructed and undeveloped, the test of what is true or not true in the moral relations of God to His creatures, would be as absurd as to make the intellect and knowledge of a savage the standard of scientific truth. The office of conscience in reference to revealed truth is negative, not positive. It can tell, under strictly guarded limitations, what is contradictory in religious opinion or practice to its own primary and fundamental convictions; it cannot tell what, not being so contradictory, may, beyond that, be becoming or right or true in the moral teachings of God.

The distinction usually made between truths of reason and truths of faith is not so broad in itself, or so clearly drawn, as to make the evidence appropriate to the one incompetent in all cases to the other. On the contrary, there are frequent instances in which truths within the proper domain of reason are accredited both by evidence inherent in themselves, and also by the evidence of testimony; and truths, again, within the domain of faith, which commend themselves to us not only on the ground of testimony, but, in addition, by their own internal evidence. The Bible presents us with many examples of this latter class. Coming to us as a supernatural communication from God, and all the truths which it declares resting on the authority of His word, its spiritual teaching claims our belief, in the first instance, on the ground of testimony from without. But many of these truths have a witness or reason in themselves, which, when they are revealed, appeals to the intellectual and moral nature of man, and so, in addition to the testimony of God, rest also on the response which they meet in reason and conscience. They have a two-

fold evidence to accredit them, and the one is not inconsistent with the other. A revelation from God must, to secure the purpose for which it is given, comprehend within it many truths altogether unknown to man, and even undiscoverable by any exercise of his faculties ; and truths, therefore, which, if revealed at all, must in the first place appeal to our faith in the testimony of the Revealer. But after they have been made known, there may be so much of a self-evidencing power within them,—so much of the light of reason and moral truth,—shining forth from their proper character and their adaptations to man's nature and need, that, over and above the testimony of God, they shall be seen of themselves to be true. The fact that they thus receive a second and distinct witness, arising out of their own meaning when it is once understood, does not destroy their claim to be regarded as a real revelation of moral and spiritual truth from God, proved to be true, and demanding to be believed because of His testimony. It is only the witness of their own internal evidence added, to confirm the external testimony borne to them by God.

It were contrary, indeed, to the whole analogies supplied by the relations of the human mind to truth, whether in the sensible or intellectual world, if in moral and religious knowledge the source were from within, and not from without. The capacities of perception and knowledge native to man, lie dormant within his bosom until awakened to life by the objects presented to them ; and the eye and the mind equally would be strangers to seeing and knowing, were it not for the outward influence in the first place exerted upon them. It is only in conformity with the same law that keeps the eye shut until opened by the light from without, and makes the mind to wait to be taught by the knowledge presented to it, that we find an external source of moral and spiritual truth provided for the conscience. There is no more incapacity in the moral nature of man for receiving from without the knowledge of the relations of the moral world, than there is in the intellectual or sensational nature of man an inability to be taught from the same quarter the relations of the truths

appropriate to each. In neither case is it the mind that creates the truth, but rather the mind that receives it as something that exists independently and apart from the mind, and as much truth before as after it is received; and the knowledge and belief of it, whether coming through the channel of testimony on the authority of another, or received on the witness of its inherent light through our own discovery of it, are in all essential respects the same. A revelation of moral and spiritual truth from without, and apart from man, is not only not impossible, but the only revelation congruous to his nature, and in analogy with the teaching by which he gains possession of other truths. The undeveloped capacities of knowledge in the mind would remain for ever latent, and the knowledge to which they are adapted undiscovered, unless the page of truth, bearing upon it its characters both of natural and supernatural instruction, were unrolled to it from without. Truth is not innate; it dwells apart from man, in the fulness of nature around, and in the infinity of God above.

But if the sources of knowledge and truth are not in man himself, but independent of him, the same may be said of the authority which claims for them the submission of his understanding and conscience. This is the case, not even excepting those fundamental intuitions which are laid deep in the very being of man, having their root within, but developed from without,—intuitions which, blind and helpless in themselves, have the law that enforces them upon our belief given them when brought into relation to external things, and through them constituted our first guides in the way of knowledge. Neither the certainty nor the authority of truth come from within, but rather from without. Not the certainty; for without the guiding and determining lights that rule his nature from abroad, his ideas of truth would be involved in helpless conjecture and doubt. Not the authority; for without a law independent and apart from himself, bringing down its obligations upon him from above, there would be nothing to command the obedience of his understanding, or to enforce the duty to believe.

In a certain sense, all truth, even the most elementary and familiar, whether in the world of matter or of mind, is a truth of God, and has a claim upon us to receive and submit to it because it is His. In a secondary and inferior way, He is teaching our minds by the facts of outward creation, and pouring upon our minds instruction from the discoveries of nature, as really as when He opens to our eyes the volume of supernatural truth. And in the fact that His own hand has inscribed with the character of truth the universe around Him, and made it to speak through varied channels to the understanding, there is an implied duty laid upon man to inquire, and understand, and believe. In a higher and far more binding sense, supernatural truth is God's, and comes to us with His authority, not implied but expressed, not obscurely intimated but distinctly announced, claiming, because it is *His*, to determine the beliefs of our understanding, and to judge the judgments even of our moral nature itself. In both cases, the standard of truth is set up apart from man, and independent of his convictions, though demanding to rule them. In both cases the authority is from abroad, though it claims to have jurisdiction, rightful and absolute, within. The truths of nature are not dependent upon the discoveries of the student who comes to inquire at her oracles, and to be taught by their wisdom; and speak with a claim to be believed no ways affected by the consideration of whether he will hear or forbear. The truths of revelation have a lawful right to demand audience and faith, apart altogether from what we may feel or not feel, believe or not believe, in regard to them. In nature and in revelation alike, the lessons of truth appeal to us with an authority apart from ourselves; and although it may be an authority very different in the two cases, as respects the degree of its binding obligation, yet it is in both from without.

It is impossible, indeed, that either in the school of nature or in the school of revelation, man can be, as regards truth, either free or a law unto himself; one principle pervades them both. If taught by nature, he must first be its servant,

and not its master, and receive from a source apart from himself, and higher than himself, the lessons which it teaches. It will speak to him as one having authority to mould his opinions and beliefs; and every truth that he claims as his discovery, and treasures up as the result of his own investigation, has in it the authority of the teacher, to which he does homage in the very act of believing it. If taught by revelation, still more must he as a little child enter into the kingdom of truth, acknowledging a dominion not his own, and submitting to it both his understanding and his faith. Within the limits of a revelation in which God and none other speaks, he cannot be a chartered libertine, free to think his own thoughts and follow his own convictions, apart from what he there is taught. To assert such a freedom from a law governing and judging both his beliefs and his practice, would be to disown God as the Lord of the conscience and the life; it would lead to a denial of man's responsibility for his opinions and conduct altogether; it would end in leaving man without a standard of right and wrong, of truth and falsehood, except what he found within his own perverted nature.

Whatever difficulties may attach to the doctrine of a source of truth and authority for man, apart from man, it is one that must be disposed of at the outset of our inquiries, because it goes to the root of the question of human responsibility. The doctrine must be dealt with and accepted, before we can discuss the credibility of a supernatural revelation, and still more before we can discuss the claims of inspiration. If man be not responsible to any standard of duty or of truth beyond himself,—if there be none above him, to whom belief and obedience on his part are due, then a supernatural revelation like that found in Scripture is impossible, or if possible, is unmeaning and superfluous. Whatever objections are implied in such a dogma, are objections that cannot be regarded as relevant to the question of the inspiration of Scripture.



## CHAPTER III.

### IMPORTANCE OF THE QUESTION.

IN order to estimate aright the importance of the question raised between the friends and opponents of inspiration, it is only necessary to advert to what is implied in the difference between an inspired and an uninspired Bible.

To do this, it is not required to enter into any minute discussion as to the precise nature of inspiration, which will more conveniently come under consideration at a subsequent stage. We can understand it sufficiently by its effects, as these are seen or declared in Scripture. Looking simply to these, they justify us in laying down the proposition, that inspiration in its results comprehends these two ideas,—namely, the *infallible truth* and the *divine authority* of everything which the inspired man asserts or sanctions as true.

In making this statement it is not unnecessary, even at the outset, to guard against misapprehension by drawing attention to a distinction of importance in the discussion, and to which it may be desirable afterwards to advert more in detail—the distinction between the Bible as a record of facts and opinions, and the Bible as a warrant for the character of them. As an *infallible record*, the inspired volume must be held to guarantee the accuracy of every event which it records as having occurred, and of the expression of every opinion which it reports as being expressed. But there is a plain and familiarly recognised distinction between facts recorded, and approved by any author; and also between opinions reported, and either asserted or authorized. There may be many things recorded in Scripture, upon the character of

which its inspired penmen pronounce no judgment whatever, either expressly or by implication. There may be facts and opinions chronicled rightly and truly, while the facts are not approved as right, nor the opinions warranted as true; on the contrary, they may be recorded for the very purpose of being pointed out as wrong or untrue. As an *infallible warrant* for what it asserts or authorizes, the inspired volume can be held as guaranteeing as right nothing beyond those facts which, directly or indirectly, its authors are seen to approve, and warranting as true no more than those opinions which they not only report, but also either affirm as their own, or sanction when expressed by others. Limiting our proposition, as it plainly ought to be limited, to what is both reported and also asserted or sanctioned by the Bible, we say that its statements are marked by these two peculiarities, namely, *infallible truth* and *divine authority*. Whether among the multitude of facts which it embodies in its history, and of opinions which it reports, the writers of Scripture do or do not lend their authority to the one as right, or to the other as true, is a question of interpretation, which criticism and exegesis must settle as they would do any similar question in regard to the author of any other book.

In like manner, when we describe and measure inspiration by its results, witnessed in the infallibility of the volume inspired, it is not needful to enter into any premature discussion as to the various forms under which it has been asserted, or the various theories entertained, differing widely, not only as to its proper nature, but especially as to the degree or extent of it in different portions of Scripture. Infallibility does not, rightly speaking, admit of degrees; nor can those who believe that the Bible is infallible, consistently assert of any passage or statement of it, that it is more or less true than another. In dealing with the point of the importance of inspiration, we forestall and set aside all controversies as to its extent in different portions of the sacred volume, when we affirm, in respect to all equally, that what it asserts or authorizes is characterized by infallible truth and

divine authority. Any difference that there may be between two volumes inspired in different degrees, in favour of the one as more, as compared with the other as less, true in its various portions or statements, sinks into insignificance in contrast with the difference between both and a volume all of whose teaching is the infallible teaching of God.

Taking, then, the word in this sense, What is the importance of the difference between a Bible written by inspiration, and a Bible written without inspiration? It is necessary to mark the points of agreement and divergence between the two views, as held by the advocates and opponents of plenary inspiration.

Both parties are agreed that, on fairly counting up the evidence, external and internal, in its variety and combination, in favour of the Bible, we are justified in regarding its demand to be received as containing a supernatural revelation to be a valid demand. Both parties admit that there are difficulties connected with its supernatural character and claims peculiar to itself, and not to be explained, but accepted, in accepting it as divine. But they also hold that these difficulties are not insuperable, and may appear to be strong only because of our ignorance of the supernatural; that it is possible, in every case of objections against Christianity, to allege that a little more light might remove them, while it is not possible, in reference to the evidence in favour of it, to say that any additional light would overturn it; and that, setting the difficulties by themselves, and counting them for what they are worth, and accepting the evidence as it actually is, it is impossible to reject the Bible as the depository of a divine message, without reversing and denying those familiar principles of judgment by which we are irresistibly led to believe truths in common life, not less beset with difficulties, and not more established by proof. Both parties, therefore, concur in believing that the sacred volume contains a communication of truths, the fountain-head of which is in God.

Further, both parties are agreed in respect to the form of perfect historical veracity in which the supernatural communication from God has been embodied and recorded. They

alike concede that, in regard to its historical as well as its supernatural character, the Bible is open to objections, in the shape of charges of discrepancy and apparent contradiction, which we have it not in our power completely to resolve. But they also are satisfied that these difficulties are precisely of the same nature as those which attach to any other historical document perfectly authentic and credible; and that although, from its peculiar character and objects as a history, the Bible may, or rather must, be exposed to such objections in a greater measure than other volumes, yet they are to be dealt with and disposed of on principles the same as are applicable to these,—leaving, as in their case, the historical veracity of its statements untouched. Both parties, therefore, agree in believing that the truths supernaturally given by God have been put upon record in a form historically pure and trustworthy.

But between historical trustworthiness on the one side, and infallible truth and divine authority on the other, there is a difference of a most important kind, vitally and extensively affecting the Bible, both as a record of objective truth and as the source of the subjective belief of it in the mind of the Christian.

This difference is to be marked not at that stage in the process when truth in the mind of God was transferred from Him to the mind of the selected penman, in order to be recorded in a book, but at a later stage, when the writer of Scripture took up his pen and inscribed the truth given him in the permanent record. The former part of the process is strictly supernatural, upon the views of both the friends and deniers of inspiration, and cannot possibly be explained or understood. The discovery made by God of divine thought to the intelligent mind of His human servant, when He gave him the revelation to be recorded, is a matter which, from its very nature, is a divine mystery which it is vain to search into. But because it is supernatural, it is exempted from the possibility of error or defect; and the revelation of fact or truth made to the prophet must have miraculously conveyed to his mind, in its unimpaired purity, the message to be delivered to others.

Between the truth as it dwelt originally in the mind of God, and the transcript of that truth supernaturally impressed upon the mind of the Scripture penman, there could have been no difference at all in the way of error or incompleteness, unless we admit the impossible idea, that the power that revealed the message did not succeed in revealing it aright. It is not necessary, and it is neither possible nor lawful, to theorize as to the manner or process of revelation, seeing that it is not natural, but supernatural. But whether given by word or by vision, or by inward impression on the mind, or in some way not mediate, but immediate and incomprehensible, the miracle of revelation was wrought for the very purpose of rightly and truly conveying the thoughts of God to the thoughts of man, and instructing the prophet in what he was chosen to record for the benefit of others; and it must have failed in its object if, in the very act, the communication was changed into error, or he received into his mind not the identical truth revealed, but another and a different. In so far as regards the revelation of the divine message apart from the record of it in the sacred volume, there is no difference between the views of the friends and the opponents of inspiration. Both admit that, in a miraculous manner unknown to us, the revelation from God was conveyed to the mind of the prophet originally in a form of absolute purity and infallible truth.

The point at which the divergence between the two views begins, is after the revelation was made by God, and made perfectly, and when it came to be recorded by man. According to the views of the advocates of plenary inspiration, the same supernatural power which guarded the revelation, in the act of being made to the prophet, from all incompleteness and mistake, also presided over the act by which he recorded it in the Bible; so that the result of this second step in the process, no less than of the first, was miraculously guarded from error, and the product was a record marked by infallible truth and divine authority.

It is not necessary in the case of inspiration, any more



than of revelation, that we understand the process or divine act. Indeed, it is impossible for us to understand either. They stand equally on the same level of the supernatural, above all natural explanation; and there are no difficulties attaching to the one that do not beset the other. The advocates of plenary inspiration only demand from their opponents the admission of a second miracle, like unto the first; and that the revelation, once supernaturally made, was also supernaturally recorded. With those who deny inspiration, on the other hand, it is held that the miracle ceased when the revelation was once made, and that the recorder of it was left to his own natural powers of memory, and judgment, and expression in committing it to memory, giving us, as other writers have given, the guarantee of his honesty, and competent knowledge of what was written, for its truth. According to both views, we have, in the first place, a proper revelation of divine origin, and infallibly true; and, in the second place, a record of it contained in a volume proved by the highest possible evidence to be credible and authentic, in the sense that the most trustworthy and best believed of human histories are. But, according to the one view, the degree of accuracy and of exemption from error which belongs to this record as an exhibition or transcript of God's mind, is confined within the limits assigned in ordinary cases to complete historical veracity; and the degree of faith which it claims, and to which it is justly entitled, is the faith measured out to perfect honesty and sufficient knowledge among men. According to the other view, the degree of purity in the record, and freedom from imperfection, is the degree that must be attributed to infallible truth; and the proportion of faith which it demands and justifies, is that entire and absolute surrender of human belief due to a communication guaranteed by the authority of God. The divergence between the two views is not only obvious, but obviously great.

Granted the perfect honesty in seeking to declare the truth, and the competent knowledge to enable them to do so, which

are demanded and exemplified in every instance of complete historical veracity among men, there are yet sources of error and imperfection left which must make the text of what they write very different from the text of a volume guarded and guaranteed by the supernatural inspiration of God. With perfect veracity and sufficient information, all conscious and intentional error is excluded. But there may be unconscious and involuntary error perfectly consistent with historical veracity, and more or less inseparable from every history written by the unaided pens of men, which introduces an element of imperfection and uncertainty into its statements entirely excluded from one written under supernatural guidance and control. Such defects, although confined within certain limits sufficiently recognised in historical criticism and interpretation, and never exceeding these, are yet of a kind inconsiderable in the case of profane historians, but not inconsiderable when connected with a matter of divine truth, and a question in which the eternal interests of men are concerned. A revelation given from God, and yet recorded without His help, is an idea which, if it finds place in reference to the Bible, must leave it open to the imputation or suspicion of errors in number and degree to which it is not easy to assign a determinate value, or indeed any value, except one conjecturally given, as the private opinions of each may rule, or the particular school of criticism to which he belongs may lead him to apportion.

The most trustworthy historian, and the farthest removed from the conscious desire to pervert the truth, is yet liable to defects of memory, with respect both to the facts and opinions of others, which he embodies in his narrative, and can furnish no great security against the occurrence of error, within certain limits, arising from this source. And had we nothing beyond the same measure and kind of security against the occurrence of error from a similar cause in the sacred volume, we should be compelled to confess that the message which it contains, although absolutely true when it came by revelation from the infallible source of truth, was

now fallible, to an unknown extent, as it exists in the human record.

Errors of judgment are no less incident to profane historians, leading to involuntary and unconscious mistake in apprehending the statements of others, and even the occurrences that may have been reported to them. And if the sacred penmen had no help beyond their own judgment in recalling and interpreting their first impressions of the divine truth revealed to them, when, after an interval of time more or less, they proceeded to record it, their first impressions, although infallibly correct at the outset, may have afterwards been erroneously apprehended when they came to be written down, to an extent reaching the full limits of unconscious misunderstanding, and only short of intentional error.

Again, if it be held that, in addition to the mere revelation given to them by God, the sacred penmen have interspersed in the Scripture text, opinions, or reasonings, or statements of their own not revealed to them, there is in this source of error a still wider and more effectual opening for human imperfection, altogether apart from historical incompetence or designed untruth.

Once more, unconscious defects of expression are equally common on the part of perfectly veracious narrators, leading not only to ambiguity in their statements, but to positive and appreciable misstatements. And if the historians of revelation have been abandoned to their own resources to guard against the many and serious errors contained within the right and the wrong use of human speech in the expression of thought, their writings are open to the unintentional inroad of human failures of a most marked kind. Errors of memory, of judgment, of opinion and expression, cannot be excluded from any narrative of man, however honest or well-informed the historian may be; and every system of interpretation applicable to profane writings, takes for granted these sources of errors, and proceeds upon them as inseparable from the text. A Bible without inspiration must be liable to the same defects.

Wherever across the page the line of demarcation is to be

drawn, still, upon the theory of an uninspired record of a supernatural revelation, there is a line that must be drawn between what is divine, and therefore certainly true, and what is human, and therefore not certainly free from error. In any simply human composition, there is always a difficulty, taking any method of interpretation, in laying down with an approach to assurance the limits of historical veracity with respect to facts, and still more with respect to opinions. The same difficulty must be felt with respect to divine revelation, if it be indebted for the only record which it has received to the unaided power of memory, judgment, and speech found in the writers. It must be permitted to every interpreter, and to every reader, to take exceptions to whatever portions or statements of the Bible, whether historical or doctrinal, he may judge, according to his own principles or method of criticism, to be justly and fairly placed outside of the privilege conferred on the words of a human author, by perfect honesty and competent knowledge.

• This eclectic principle of choosing and rejecting from the statements of Scripture what seems to him best, can hardly be applied by any critic with safety to the text, because there is no method of determining to what extent it may or may not be carried. Without inspiration, and resting on the historical veracity of Scripture alone, one man may, by a just or generous application of the principles of interpretation, find within the compass of the revelation contained in it, the essential facts and doctrines of Christianity, and all that is necessary to save the soul. But another man may be led by his methods of interpretation to a very different result. There is no principle embosomed in the theory of a supernatural revelation recorded by merely natural instrumentality, which distinctly declares, or indeed declares at all, what amount of truth is to be set to the credit of the divine communication, and what amount of error to the discredit of the human record. The advocates of the theory do not pretend to furnish a key to the difficulty of separating between them; and yet a separation must be made, when undeniably

we have the presence of both in one record, and when we are forced by what is due to God's truth to endeavour to decide between it and man's imperfection. The difference cannot be less than unspeakably important between a volume, all whose statements are vouched by the truth and guarded by the authority of God, and thus entirely separated from human error and imperfection, and another volume in which errors of memory and judgment, of opinion and expression, mingle with a message from Heaven to an indefinite extent, and when there is no principle or criterion supplied by which to discriminate between them.

The same observations, although in a less degree, are applicable to every scheme of inspiration short of a plenary one. It is not necessary to enter into any discussion at this stage of the many mutilated theories which attribute different degrees of inspiration to different portions or statements of Scripture, abridging of its fulness the divine character which belongs to all of it equally. But between all of these, and the one view which ascribes a plenary infallibility and divine authority to the whole Bible, there is a difference vital and fundamental. The difference between what is infallible and what is not, is not diminished by the consideration, that what is fallible may be less frequently and less extensively chargeable with error, according to one theory, than according to another. In none of them is there any principle or criterion to be found, by which it is possible to draw the line between what is divine and what is not,—so that the Bible, coming to us with equal claims in all its canonical books to be accounted as the depository of an infallible revelation of truth from God, is regarded as unequally representative of that truth; and in repudiating certain portions or statements of it as errors, however unintentional on the part of the original writers, and due to the Jewish mind, or to the defective intellectual or moral development of times or persons, we are accepting and rejecting what, by our canon of interpretation, we think to be right and wrong according to no certain rule of judgment. Viewing it in the restricted



light of its effect upon the text of Scripture, as an objective presentation of truth to its readers, it is not easy to over-estimate the importance of the difference that separates between a Bible due equally in all its parts to the inspiration of God, and a Bible either entirely a human record without inspiration at all, or a record mutilated as to its divine and infallible character by theories of partial inspiration. The existence or not of an infallible standard of right and truth, is a difference of kind and not of degree, and therefore a fundamental difference. The more or the less of human error, the greater or less degree of man's fallibility, is a difference that sinks into unimportance in comparison with it.

But there is another aspect of the question that puts the vast importance of the difference between an inspired and an uninspired Bible in a light still clearer, and perhaps more impressive.

The Bible cannot be regarded exclusively in the light of an objective presentation of truth, in which there is found the letter of an external rule for belief and practice. It must be regarded also in its relation to the intellectual and moral nature of man; and in the subjective revelation which it makes of itself in the actual faith and obedience of the Christian who receives it into his soul, and makes it one with his spiritual being and practical life. The supernatural revelation of God contained in the letter of Scripture must be translated into Christian faith and holiness; the doctrine must unite itself unto the life which it creates, before we can understand aright the difference between inspired and human truth, or between inspired truth in its native purity, and in its combination with uninspired error. And these two peculiarities, which mark out the Bible as different from all other books,—namely, its infallible truth and its divine authority,—are precisely the two elements which alone are fitted to the nature of man in such a way as to bring it into subjection to and reconciliation with God, and to make man himself to be both God's servant and His friend.

There is infallible *truth* in the Bible, appealing alike to the

intellectual and to the moral nature of man, and fitted to call forth a belief that manifests the character of both, and to which both contribute. There is divine and absolute *authority*, speaking with command both to the understanding and the conscience, and subduing the opinions of the one, and the feelings of obligation of the other, into a conformity with the mind and will of the Most High. There is infallible truth, announcing the promise of mercy and reconciliation from God, and thereby inviting as well as warranting the faith that brings the sinner to His footstool to rest in His word. There is divine and absolute authority, ruling alike the inner and outer life, rectifying and governing the judgments of the intellectual and moral nature, and the course of daily conduct; and so bringing the whole man, spiritual, rational, and practical, into harmony with the divine nature. Truth from God creating and inviting faith in man, and authority from God demanding and securing obedience,—these are the two elements, each in its divine singularity and strength, which make the Bible to be unlike to any other book; and these are the two elements which convert the letter of its revelation into a life, and bring the convicted sinner into reconciliation with God, and into conformity with the divine nature through faith and holiness.

There is much in the actual errors which a denial of inspiration sanctions in the text of Scripture, and in the uncertainty as to their place and amount, even beyond actual errors, fitted to make manifest the importance of the distinction between a Bible wholly given of God and one that is not. But the two Bibles, when translated into the language of that faith and obedience which they respectively originate and foster in those who receive them, have readings so markedly different and even opposite, that they are fitted in this way no less strongly to bring out the distinction.

In the case of truth not only given by revelation of God, but also conveyed through the inspiration of His servant with unmingled purity to the page where we read it, we have an infallible foundation of certainty on which our faith may build

at once, and for ever rest. In the case of the same truth, given by revelation at first with equal purity, but conveyed through the medium of a record in which it is mingled and concealed amid the errors of man, there can be no infallible foundation like the other, and no ground of perfect certainty which we can build upon with satisfaction. Can it be said that, in the two cases, the belief is the same in respect either of certainty in its object or of assurance in itself? The record, so different in the two supposed instances, must leave an impression as greatly different in the two minds to which appeal is made. A record that bears upon itself the image of infallible truth transferred from the mind of God, must create its own likeness in the mind of the man who believes in God, and appropriates the truth as God's. There will be faith born within him of a corresponding excellency, and having a strength equally divine. A record that bears upon it the image of mingled truth and error, derived on the one side from the infallible revelation of God, and on the other side from the fallible record of man, will reproduce in the heart a faith in which the truth and the error must equally find their counterpart and answering resemblance. It will be a faith which has its divine assurance destroyed by the presence of human uncertainty and doubt. A Bible with the inspiration of God, and a Bible without this inspiration, cannot produce or warrant the same faith. The object of belief is different, and so is the belief itself.

But it is important to look not only at the difference between the two cases as respects the character of the record or of Scripture itself, but also at the different exercises of mind involved in the act of believing in the one instance and in the other. The perplexity into which the student of revelation must inevitably be cast, when sitting down to study and understand it through the medium of an uninspired record, and the effort of mind to which he is constrained in endeavouring to harmonize the infallible truth of the one with the uncertain utterances of the other, are themselves inconsistent with both the spirit and the assurance of Christian faith. But

worse than this : he comes to the Bible, and sits over its contents in the attitude of a judge who is to decide for himself what in it is true and worthy to be believed, and what in it is false and deserving to be rejected ; not in the attitude of the disciple who, within the limits of the inspired record, feels himself at Jesus' feet to receive every word that cometh out of His mouth. The assurance that, within the page of Scripture, there is the truth of God and nothing else,—the assurance that the Bible is the word of God, and not simply containing it, in more or less of its human language, is one fitted to solemnize the soul with a holy fear, and a devout submission to its declarations as the very utterances of God. The assurance, on the contrary, that the truths of the revelation are mingled, in a manner unknown and indeterminate, with the defects of the record, is one which reverses the attitude, and brings man as a master to sit in judgment on the Bible as sisted to his bar, and bound to render up to him a confession of its errors, and not a declaration of its one and authoritative truth.

The inquiries of the student into the text of an uninspired Bible, to separate between the evil and the good, can hardly be prosecuted except in a spirit of critical doubt, the very opposite of faith. When these inquiries are concluded, and have effected the desired separation between the letter of the human record and the spirit of the divine revelation, the very discoveries of truth which he believes that he has made, are like the spoils of knowledge gathered from the field of nature or of science where he has triumphed,—valued and embraced because they are his own discoveries, and not God's. He has found indeed the truth, as he believes, after difficult and arduous contending with error ; but it is his own right arm that has gained the victory, and his own wisdom that has prevailed : it is not the truth of God that has found him, and subdued his understanding and heart under its power ; he is the master, and not the servant, of what he believes. The attitude and the spirit of the man who believes the revelation of God in the Scripture, because he has found it to be true

as tried by his own reason or moral nature, are the very opposite of the attitude and spirit of the man who believes it to be true because it is given him of God, and who tries his reason and moral nature by its teachings. In making his selection between what is truth and what is error in an uninspired Bible, the student is shut up to the necessity of putting his own rational or spiritual intuitions into the place of an ultimate judge in a matter where the external evidence accredits equally what he receives and what he rejects. In receiving all alike in an inspired Bible, as equally the truth of God, the student brings his rational and spiritual intuitions to its teaching as their ultimate judge. If we would speak in the language of Scripture faith, we must reverse the dictum of Coleridge, and hold that it is better to say, 'The Bible is true, because we have found it to be the word of God,' than to say, 'The Bible is the word of God because we have found it to be true.'<sup>1</sup>

It is difficult to conceive that any plan could have been devised to give the needed encouragement to a sinner to come to God, or the necessary security after he had returned, except the plan that holds out the divine word itself, and nothing else, as his motive and warrant to approach, and as the ground of rest after he had done so. There are depths of unbelief and despair into which a sinner is thrown by conviction of sin, out of which no invitation of mercy could move him, except an invitation made strong by the very word, and backed by the veracity, of God. And even after he has sought and found rest in the free grace of the gospel, there are no words of man, but words of the Most High, that can bear the weight of his eternal hopes and fears; so that there could be no peace to his soul, either now or for hereafter, unless he was shut up within the stronghold of the divine truthfulness. A motive for hope less powerful would not win back the outcast at first, and a foundation for confidence less secure would not satisfy him after he had come.

Even were the same overtures of peace and invitations to

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge: 'Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit,' p. 73.



return addressed to him on the authority of a fellow-creature, they would have no virtue in them to win him to hope or repentance. And were the very same truths as to the divine character and way of salvation, which he rests upon without doubt when declared by the Almighty Himself, avouched on the veracity of man, they would call forth and sustain no belief; or if they did, it would be a belief that was not faith in God. The faith that finds in the divine truth its encouragement from the beginning, and its warrant ever afterwards, is the only faith that will bring a sinner either to reconciliation or to rest with God; and that faith can be generated and sustained in peace by nothing but the infallible word of God, made ours in a way and form that guarantee it against the uncertainties and shortcomings of human thought and speech. A belief that rests upon a Bible partly of God and partly of man, can never have such a foundation. Without a key to unlock the secret of what belongs to the infallible revelation, and what to the fallible record—without a clue to guide him while he searches into all things, so that he may hold fast only that which is good,—the student of Scripture can never feel that he has found a satisfying and certain resting-place for belief, and that his heart is stayed upon none other than the word of the unchangeable God. To be a divine faith, it must rest upon the divine word, and none other. To be a secure faith, it must be secured by the truth which cannot lie. To be a saving faith, it must be built only upon that word which only can save.

There is a twofold capacity in man brought to bear on his restoration to God, and on the re-establishment of the broken harmony between his nature and the divine. There is the capacity of faith, bringing him near to God through the belief of peace and forgiveness at first, and keeping him secure in the continued assurance of the divine favour afterwards. But there is also the capacity of submission to authority brought into exercise under the revelation of a law which gradually subdues and fashions the whole being into an entire conformity to God's will. And, just as there is infallible truth

provided in the Bible to develop and satisfy *faith*, so there is a divine and absolute authority made known in order to command and secure obedience.

X To bring back man, disobedient and estranged in every department of his rational, moral, and active nature, into willing subjection to God, as the lawful ruler of his opinions, and beliefs, and conduct, is a problem which nothing can solve except the revelation of an authority seen to be absolute, and confessed to be righteous and good. Conscience, which has been left free from the doctrines and commandments of men, will yield up its freedom to nothing but the authority of God. The will, which knows no master on earth, will render an unenforced obedience to none but God Himself, as Lord over it. The understanding, ruling amid the other faculties of the human mind, will, in its pride of place, confess itself to be responsible for its opinions and judgments to no other than the law of its Creator. No voice but the one voice of the Sovereign of all can speak with a power which man's rational and moral nature will own to be lawful, and at the same time feel to be irresistible; and the Bible itself will never carry with it authority supreme over every power and principle within us, laying bonds alike on the understanding and conscience of man, unless it is seen and felt to be the word of Him whose word is supreme in heaven and on earth.

Even were they the same Scripture truths in every respect that were announced to us, and the same Scripture duty, in all its moral and spiritual force, that was declared, on the bare word and authority of man, they would cease to have the virtue which they now have to move the understanding or to bind the conscience. To attempt to lay upon us the belief or obligation of them by human authority would generate a feeling both of oppression and wrong; and the truth and duty alike would sink down to the level of any other that might or might not commend itself to us by its own internal evidence or intrinsic rightness. If the Bible is to subdue all under it with authority, it must speak with a divine voice; if the understanding is to yield up its opinions, and the con-

science to rectify its beliefs, in homage to its word, it must be known to be the word of the Most High: the surrender of thought, and feeling, and obedience which it claims can be a willing surrender only to the presence and the power of God. No Bible uninspired, and therefore unauthoritative, can do this. When an infallible revelation appeals to us in the stammering accents of fallible men; when divine truth speaks to us through the channel of human infirmity or even error, it is felt that the supernatural element in the book of God is shorn of its strength, and has become weak like that of other books. The mixture of truth found in the teachings of man drawn from the Bible, when received into the heart, *may* have power to quicken it with life from on high; the unmixed truth in the teaching of God's inspired record, when believed and appropriated, alone has the power that *must* renew the nature and save the soul.

There is indeed a measure of influence in all truth, come from what quarter it may, to convince the understanding and to affect the conscience in consequence of its adaptation to the rational and moral nature of man. Truth is to be believed and obeyed wherever it is found. But apart from this common power or authority which belongs to all truth, and immeasurably above it in influence and effect, is the power or authority which belongs to divine truth, because it is divine. It is the authority that speaks from God that alone is able to change the steadfast judgments of the understanding, and to rule its strong convictions with a force manifest through its convictions, and yet superior to them. It is the power that dwells in God's word, and that only, that can turn the unbending will with an obedience imposed from without, and yet a willing obedience. It is the strength that moves in infallible truth that can move the human conscience, and determine its beliefs with a might apart from itself, and yet working through its own proper nature,—ruling and subduing it, and yet not constraining or doing violence to its freedom. The human understanding will not yield up its opinions, the will cannot be made willing, the conscience will not change

its sense of moral obligation, except under the influence and in the presence of divine authority, speaking with divine power through the infallible word of God. The very same truth, without this, will not bind the understanding or conscience. It is through the influence and effect of this authority that the whole nature of man—in its intellectual and moral and active powers,—his entire being, in its length and breadth, in its weakness and in its strength—is brought under the control of God; and the conformity between himself and the divine nature, interrupted by sin, is re-established in holiness.

But nothing but an authority in divine truth, supreme and almighty, can conquer and secure such a submission. Uninspired truth, having authority in itself, but without the authority of God, cannot do it. The traditions and teaching of men, although right, and rightly adapted to his intelligent and spiritual nature within, cannot do it. They cannot make the will surrender its previous bent and inclinations, or the understanding its rooted opinions, or the moral sense its erring convictions of right and wrong, through an irresistible power overcoming and yet not constraining their free choice and ultraneous determination. This is a mysterious dominion over the nature of man, exercised by Him alone who has dominion over all. The administration of such a government can be carried on only through the infallible utterances of His law commanding and forbidding; and when, in obedience to its authority, the understanding submits its beliefs, and the conscience its rules, and the life its obedience, with a sure but unforced submission, it is an homage on the part of the converted man that is due to, and could be secured by nothing but, the power of God in His own word. That power goes out in comparative weakness, when ministered through a fallible Bible, and mingled with its errors. The partial submission that might be given to such a power in the case of any one, would be a faith resting partly on the word of God and partly on the word of man, and an obedience rendered in some measure to the one and in some measure to the other.

The difference between an inspired and an uninspired Scripture, in so far as it is an objective rule of truth and duty, is manifested in the fact that it is difficult, according to any fixed or intelligible principle, to say what in such a record is the word of God and what is the word of man. The difference between an inspired and an uninspired Scripture, in so far as it is turned into a subjective religion in the hearts of those who receive it, is manifested in the fact that it is hard to tell what, in the faith and obedience rendered to it, is divine in its source and character, and therefore acceptable to God, and what is not. In the former case, the ordinary methods of criticism and interpretation that attempt to define the limits of historical veracity, and to determine what, in a profane historian, is strictly true, and what due to unintentional errors of opinion, of memory and expression, may do something towards the same object in regard to the text of the Bible; but, at the best, the result, after the most dispassionate and successful emendation, can hardly be anything more than conjectural. In the latter case, the self-evidencing power of supernatural doctrine and precept, and the internal evidences by which Christianity commends itself to the conscience of those who embrace it, may go some length in separating between what is divine and what is human in the religion of the heart and life; but when such a criterion is carried beyond the very central truths of the gospel to others, and made to apply to any except the primary duties which it enjoins, it becomes uncertain, and may be easily and greatly misinterpreted. Whether as a doctrine or as a life, an objective creed or a subjective religion, it is not easy, with a fallible Bible, to tell what is human and what is divine.



## CHAPTER IV.

### HISTORY OF OPINION.

THE history of opinion in the Church of God in connection with inspiration, although not, strictly speaking, involved in the argument, may yet furnish aid to a better understanding of the question at issue, and perhaps to the right solution of it. In seeking to understand the views entertained on the subject, it is important to distinguish between it and the question of the canonical character of the Scripture books.

On the supposition that a supernatural revelation has actually been given by God, and put on record by men, there are obviously two questions that immediately press for an answer, and are quite distinct the one from the other. The first refers to the record, and demands to know where this revelation is to be found, or, in other words, what writings contain the account of it. The second refers to the authority to be attached to these writings, and demands to know whether they are to be regarded as human or divine, and what measure of truth or authority belongs to them. The former question opens up the controversy as to the canon,—the latter the controversy as to the inspiration of Scripture.

The opinions that have been entertained as to what writings do or do not contain the record of revelation,—as to the genuineness of the various documents that make up the one Bible,—and as to the integrity and purity of the original text that has been transmitted to us,—are quite distinct from the views that may have been held at various times in respect to the nature, measure, or effect of that divine superintendence under which the record was written. A man may hold that

the Bible, as we now possess it, is made up of all, and of none but, the books or documents which have any claim to be accounted the record of a supernatural communication from God. Yet, with respect to all these books, he may believe that they are uninspired, and no more than human, although the vessels in which a heavenly treasure is contained ; or with respect to some, and not to others, he may believe that they are divine in their composition as well as in their contents. On the other hand, a man may deny the canonical authority of more or fewer of the books of Scripture ; while, in respect to those which he does retain as canonical, he may hold that they are inspired in the fullest and strictest sense, and therefore infallible. He may even add to the canon of Scripture books or portions of books which we believe to have no title to be regarded as in any sense containing a supernatural revelation, and yet ascribe to them as well as to the sacred volume the character of complete inspiration. In the ancient Church there are examples to be found of parties holding opinions belonging to one or other of the latter-mentioned views ; in recent times we have instances of persons holding the former. The denial, by addition or subtraction, of the Scripture canon as held by Protestant churches, is not to be accounted the same thing as a denial of inspiration ; while a coincidence, as regards the canon, is not to be regarded as an identity of views on inspiration. The history of opinion is not the same as to both.

But it is not less important to distinguish between the history of opinions as to inspiration itself, and as to the special agency or process through which the result of an inspired volume has been effected. From the very nature of the case, it is impossible for us to understand the 'divers manners' in which the divine power came upon and influenced those holy men of old who spake and wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ; and yet, from a very early period in the history of the Church, there were indications of the strongest desire to penetrate into the divine mystery of inspiration, and to explain both the form in which the supernatural gift was bestowed and the condition of the prophet

under its influence. Such attempts were worse than simply fruitless, as being endeavours to explain upon natural principles what was divine and supernatural. By the diversity of the attempts and the opposite modes of explanation adopted, they have served to give an appearance of diversity to the testimony of the Church on inspiration, as if opinion were really divided, or even contradictory, as to the infallibility of the word of God. When men begin to speculate about the modes or kinds of the supernatural, and about the condition of inspired men when under the control of a power divine and unexplained, it is impossible that they can think or speak alike, just because they are attempting to be wise above what is written, and to dogmatize upon what is unintelligible. An opposition of sentiment and a diversity of expression are to a large extent unavoidable. The history of opinion in the Church in connection with the subject of inspiration has shown how prone men are, under the influence of personal tendencies or different schools of philosophy and theology, to oscillate to almost an indefinite extent between the opposite poles of a denial of the divine or a denial of the human element in the process whereby a message of truth from God was embodied in the page of the sacred volume. Between the two extremes, almost every diversity of opinion may be entertained as to the mode of the inspiring agency, and the condition of the inspired man under its influence, so long as attention is restricted to these; while there may be, apart from these, no diversity of opinion at all as to the result wrought out in a written word divine and infallible. In weighing and estimating aright the testimony of the Church on inspiration, it is of moment to distinguish not only between the history of opinion on the canon and that on the inspiration of Scripture, but also between the latter and the very different views that have been entertained as to the mode and kind of inspiration.

In so far as regards the opinion of the Jewish Church down to the date of Christ and afterwards, there is no room for any doubt. The sources of our knowledge as to the belief

of the Jews on the subject of inspiration, apart from the information afforded by the Scripture itself, are mainly to be found in the Apocryphal writings and the testimony of Josephus and Philo.

The very great uncertainty in which the dates of the Apocryphal books are involved, may leave us in some doubt as to their precise age; but probably the earliest testimony by any profane Jewish writer to the inspiration of the sacred volume is to be met with in these spurious books. The claim on their own part, express or implied, to a divine origin and inspiration, is itself an indirect confession of the inspiration of the Old Testament books, after which they are imitated. But throughout the Apocryphal writings there is the most express and unhesitating assertion of that long series of divine revelations which had been given in the line of Abraham, and unreserved testimony borne to the prophetic character of Moses and the other messengers of Heaven under the ancient dispensation,—the character of absolute certainty and truth is ascribed to their writings, and God Himself is represented as speaking through their lips.

But the most explicit and direct evidence, apart from Scripture itself, as to the Jewish opinions on inspiration at the time of Christ, is to be found in the writings of Josephus and Philo, the former of whom, from his character and position, may be regarded as the most adequate representative of the pure Judaism of Palestine, and the latter of whom gave expression in his writings to the views of those of his countrymen who had to a greater or less extent been affected by the philosophy of the Alexandrian school.

The question of inspiration is nowhere formally discussed as a dogma or theory in the writings of Josephus; but notwithstanding of this circumstance, or perhaps in consequence of it, we have more unmistakeable evidence in his works of the belief of his countrymen in the great truth of the divine authority and infallibility of the Bible, than any general discussion of the nature and effects of God's controlling agency in the composition of it could have afforded. When, long

after his day, the later Jews began to theorize on the nature of inspiration, they affected to discover distinctions in the degree and kind of it not known before. But with Josephus there was no more than one kind and degree of inspiration attaching to the Old Testament books. They were all and equally divine and infallible. According to him, the prophetic office in the person of Moses, the first writer and grand apostle of the Old Testament, was one which implied a special mission from God and His authority, to which supernatural manifestations were given, and the power of predicting future events belonged, and which makes what he communicated to be the commandments of God. In this peculiar and supernatural sense of prophecy, the office was continued with intervals during the period of the Old Testament dispensation down to the reign of Artaxerxes, at which date it ceased. 'Every one,' says Josephus, 'is not permitted of his own accord to be a writer, nor is there any disagreement in what is written,—they being only prophets that have written the original and earliest accounts of things as they learned them of God Himself by inspiration; and others have written what happened in their own times, and that in a very distinct manner also. For we have not an innumerable multitude of books among us, disagreeing from and contradicting one another, but only twenty-two books, which contain the record of all the past times, which are justly believed to be divine. . . . It is true our history has been written since Artaxerxes very particularly, but has not been esteemed of the like authority with the former by our forefathers, because there has not been a like succession of prophets since that time; and how firmly we have given credit to those books of our own nation is evident from what we do. For so many ages that have already passed no one has been so bold as either to add anything to them, or to make any change in them; but it has become natural to all Jews immediately and from their very birth to esteem those books to contain divine doctrines, and to persist in them, and, if occasion be, willingly to die for them.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Josephus, *contra Apion*, lib. i. c. 7, 8.



Philo, nearly contemporary with Josephus, coincides with him in the testimony he bears to the universal belief of the Jews in the plenary inspiration of the Old Testament books. Writing from Alexandria, the very centre of the philosophy of the day, and imbued deeply with its style of thinking, there is a great deal more than in Josephus of theoretical views in his statement of the doctrine, but not less decisive evidence as to the prevalence of it in the traditions and creed of the Jewish people. In his explanation of the inspiration of the Old Testament, or rather in theorizing on the kind of influence brought to bear on the sacred penmen, and their state of mind during the continuance of it, Philo was accustomed to transfer the ideas of the ancients respecting the *μαντική* or divine possessions, under which their oracles were uttered, to the case of the prophets of the former economy. But the whole of their inspiration was not borrowed from such a source. It was a Jewish fact, to which Philo only sought to give a heathen explanation, that he might recommend it to more favourable regard. Under the influence of inspiration, the person inspired was, in harmony with the prevalent views of ancient times, reduced to a state of unconsciousness, and became the unintelligent instrument of giving utterance to the thoughts and words of another; under the higher degree of the divine afflatus (*ἐρμηνεία*, interpretation), the party subjected to it became one with the divine power that moved and spoke within him; under the lower degree of the same power (*προφητεία*, prophecy), he was taught by God in answer to his inquiries, and received the ability to predict future events.

But while the explanations given by Philo of the theory of inspiration are entirely speculative, and even to a large extent unintelligible, yet nothing can be more certain than his belief in the fact in connection with the writings of the Old Testament. While assigning to Moses the first place in rank and nearness of communion with God among the authors of the sacred volume, he asserts his own belief, shared by the Jews, that God inspired, and spoke by, them all. Indeed, his own

system of allegorical interpretation is to a large extent founded on his conviction of the divine truth and significance of the slightest statement or even word of Scripture, and of the fullness of spiritual truth embodied within the letter. However little we may value his theories of inspiration, or his methods of interpretation, they both go to add to the strength of the evidence he furnishes for the universal belief of his countrymen in the infallibility of the Old Testament Scripture.

But the belief of the ancient Church in the infallibility of the Old Testament writings, in the strictest sense of the term, is most fully brought out in the recorded sentiments of the Jewish people, and in the conduct of our Lord and His apostles, as these are made evident in the New Testament itself. The detailed and complete testimony borne by the New Testament to the infallibility of the Old, is a matter that will be dealt with at a future stage of the discussion, and is not to be entered upon at present. But, apart altogether from the general evidence resulting in favour of the inspiration of the Old Testament, from the inseparable connection between the religion of the earlier and that of the later economy, as essential parts of the same system, it is plain that the references to historical events, the appeals for confirmation of doctrine, the allusion to the fulfilment of prophecy and type, found in the later and pointing to the earlier volume, form themselves a complete demonstration of the conviction not only of the New Testament writers themselves, but also of their contemporaries, of the truth of the Old.

Such links of connection between the two, binding the truth of the one into the truth of the other, cannot be got rid of without sacrificing the historical veracity of the New Testament. Whether the references to Old Testament narratives and events made in the New were accurately made or not, they certainly took for granted a common acknowledgment of the truth of such a history on the part both of the writer and the reader. The doctrines that appealed to the Old Testament for their confirmation undoubtedly were made to do so, whether successfully or not, because the Old Testa-

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ment by both parties was admitted to be authoritative. The fulfilment of prophecy and type, whether really fulfilled or not, was represented as accredited by the earlier volume only in consequence of the mutual belief that its record was infallible and true. Unless the historical veracity of the New Testament is to be denied altogether, we have, without reference to its authority as an inspired witness, irresistible proof, in its numberless references and appeals to the Old, of the universal belief of the Jewish people, in the time of our Lord, of the infallible truth and authority of the latter. The very names and titles and words significant of inspired truth employed by Josephus and Philo to indicate their belief in the divine original and form of the Old Testament, reappear in the language of the New Testament writers in their application to the same record. The doctrine of the infallibility of the Old Testament, as an article in the common creed of all Jews, is proved alike by profane and by sacred testimony.

The opinions of the Jews, before and about the date of Josephus and Philo, are to be distinguished from those that have originated in more modern times. The influence of Maimonides in the twelfth century probably introduced, or at all events gave currency to, views unfriendly to the strict ideas of inspiration formerly entertained. In the case of Philo, the distinctions he employed to explain the divine agency in the process of inspiration were confined to the manner of its operation, and did not affect the result witnessed in an infallible record. But in tampering with the mystery, and perhaps with a view to explain the threefold division of Scripture recognised from early times into the Law, the Prophets, and the other Scriptures, Maimonides taught distinctions in inspiration, whereby the books of Moses, or the Law, were exalted to the highest position in point of authority; the writings of the Prophets ranked next in order; and lastly, the remaining Scriptures of the Old Testament were placed lowest of all.<sup>1</sup> Such distinctions, while they illustrate in a

<sup>1</sup> Havernick: 'Introduction to New Testament,' p. 59. Lee: 'Inspiration of Holy Scripture,' pp. 51, 459.

very striking manner the danger of attempting to break in upon the one mysterious and undivided act of God in supernaturally giving inspiration to His own revelation by theoretical explanations, were unknown to the ancient Jews. According to their belief, the Old Testament, in all its parts, was equally the inspired and infallible word of God.

The opinion of the early Christian Church as to inspired Scripture did not differ from that of its Jewish contemporaries. From the time of Christ downwards, and for centuries afterwards, there was hardly any difference of opinion as to the infallibility of the Bible, and little comparatively, for a time, of the perilous attempts to define or limit by human speculations the methods through which the result was accomplished.

The history of the many controversies within the Church itself, from the apostolic age and onward, is itself the most conclusive evidence that, with regard to the Bible as the ultimate standard of truth, there was no controversy at all. The position which it occupied in the estimation of both parties in the strife was that of a judge, supreme in authority and infallible in its decisions, from which there could be no appeal. With the exception of a very small section of heretics, put beyond the pale of Christian controversialists by the very fact of their rejection of the infallible truth of Scripture, there were none who, even in the extremities of argument or defeat, refused to be adjudged by its statements. There were for a time a hesitation of opinion in the early Christian Church, and a discussion as to certain books, whether they ought or ought not to be read in the assemblies for worship on the Lord's day, and to be received within the limits of the canon which contained the supernatural revelation of divine truth. But such discussions only brought out more forcibly the distinction, recognised by all, between what was authoritative and what was not. In like manner, there never was a period in the history of ecclesiastical doctrine free from the anxious warfare raised by those who perverted the Scriptures themselves to dangerous

error. But in no controversy, between whomsoever carried on, within the bosom of the Church, was there ever any appeal imagined to be possible from the judgments pronounced by infallible Scripture.

But there is another consideration of a general kind that illustrates in a striking manner the harmony of opinion that prevailed in the early Christian Church as to the divine authority and inspiration of the Bible. Notwithstanding that the spirit of Christianity in the infancy of the Church was practical rather than speculative, yet it is remarkable to observe how, within not a long period of time, its main doctrines became the subjects of controversy, and received those more precise explanations and that more accurate dogmatic form which controversy and discussion alone and necessarily impose upon them. The question of the authority and infallibility of Scripture did not, however, pass through this process until many centuries afterwards. There are no definitions and limitations of the doctrine on one side and another, elaborately drawn out and reduced to systematic form, as if armed on every side to repel assault, or fortified around to prevent controversy or misunderstanding. The belief of the early Church in an infallible Bible was too simple to require to be fenced about with the safeguard of explanations, and too unanimous to need support from argument. There was neither controversy nor theorizing demanded to satisfy the faith of Christians; nor did the one or the other appear in connection with inspiration for the first eight hundred years.

The idea of a state of total unconsciousness and prostration of mind and body ascribed to the inspired person in the systems of ancient heathenism, and borrowed from thence by the adherents of the Montanist heresy, towards the end of the second century, was rejected by the early Church as inconsistent with the facts of an inspired Bible; but no elaborate attempt was made to erect over against the error a theory adequate to explain the results. It could hardly indeed be avoided, in the practical and popular applications of such a subject, to employ language that seemed to embody some



system or theory to represent the facts of the case. But these were used for the purpose of illustration, and as helps to the conception of the subject, rather than as an explanation of it, and certainly had no effect in the way of limiting the fulness of inspiration, or detracting from the infallibility of Scripture. The analogy of the hand sweeping over the lyre, employed by Justin Martyr to represent the agency of the Spirit on inspired men, and reproduced by subsequent writers, was used as a popular or rhetorical illustration rather than as an accurate explanation of the fact; and, indeed, if interpreted and applied more literally than was intended, would have led to the strictest view of inspiration. But apart from suchlike illustrations, and from the leaven of Philo's teaching, there is a comparative absence in the early Christian writers of any endeavour to define the theory of God's controlling agency in inspiration, such as was afterwards witnessed; and this circumstance ought not to be omitted in our estimate of the evidence for that harmony of opinion, undisturbed alike by polemical and dogmatic teaching, which prevailed as to the infallibility of the Bible.

The evidence for the opinions of the post-apostolic Church is much too full, and constituted too much of details, to be adequately exhibited here.<sup>1</sup> There is hardly any question that can be more satisfactorily settled by proper evidence, than the unanimous belief of all Christians in the divine authority and certainty of what is contained in the sacred volume. The evidence may be ranged under three heads: *First*, there is abundant proof that the early Christians received the New Testament as of equal authority, and standing on the same level of supernatural inspiration, as the Old, which was held to be infallible; *secondly*, the current and universal style of referring to and characterizing the Scripture demonstrated their belief in its infallibility; and *thirdly*, the invariable and unanimous denial of error or contradiction in the Bible

<sup>1</sup> For the primitive doctrine of inspiration, see Westcott: 'Introduction to Study of the Gospels,' p. 383; Lee: 'Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures,' p. 485.

evinces their conviction of its absolute truthfulness. No more than a mere specimen of the proof can be given.

(1.) The belief of the divine truth and supernatural authority of the Old Testament had been imported into the early Christian Church from the Jewish, and formed the type after which their ideas of the New Testament writings were modelled. The undeniable testimony borne by Christ and His apostles to the infallible truth of the earlier volume, was received as conclusive by all who owned their authority as divine, and therefore by all who made a profession of Christianity. Starting from this point, the common ascription, by Christians of every name, of the title *New Testament* to the later writings, is evidence of a common belief in the early Church that they formed a supplement to the *Old*, and that they not only contained a revelation similar to that which had gone before, but were themselves entitled to be placed on the same level as to supernatural authority. The canon of the Old Testament, previously established as an article of belief in the Church, paved the way for the introduction of the New Testament canon into the same place of honour and esteem, so soon as it was completed by the addition to the others of the latest of the inspired writings that belonged to it. With the exception of the Gnostics, and particularly the Marcionites, who either rejected the Old Testament altogether, or denied its authority as a divine standard of truth, the unanimous consent of the catholic Church to the earlier volume defined the character and fixed the limits of the authority of the later; and accordingly we find numerous testimonies to the co-ordinate and equal authority of the Old Testament and the New, evincing the belief of the Church in the infallible truth of both.

In the short epistle of Polycarp, belonging to the early part of the second century, he classes under the same title of 'sacred writings' and 'scriptures' the Old Testament and the New, and enforces his injunction equally by the authority of David and of Paul. About the middle of the same century, Justin Martyr assures us that Christians be-

lieve in the voice of God declared by the apostles of Christ and promulgated by prophets.<sup>1</sup> And in another passage he tells us, that when we hear the words of prophets spoken by any of them, we are not to think that they are uttered by the person inspired, but by the divine word which moves them.<sup>2</sup> Towards the close of the century we have the witness of Clement of Alexandria to the equal inspiration and authority of the Old Testament and the New. He includes under the common name of Scripture, the Law, the Prophets, and the blessed Gospel, and intimates that they have been made sure and confirmed by almighty power.<sup>3</sup> In another place he declares that we have, as the fountain-head of doctrine, the Lord who, by the prophets, the gospel, and the blessed apostles, at sundry times and in divers manners, from first to last, draws down our knowledge.<sup>4</sup> Contemporaneously with Clement we have the testimony of Tertullian, who exclaims that that church is blessed which combines the law and the prophets with the evangelical and apostolical writings, and from them draws her faith.<sup>5</sup> About the middle of the third century, Origen speaks in the strongest terms of the equal authority of the Old Testament and the New, and denounces as a heretic the man who says that there is one God of the law and the prophets, and another of the evangelists. He goes on to say, that if there be any who assert that there is one Holy Ghost who was in the prophets, and another who was in the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ, they are guilty of the same sin as the man who, as far as in him lies, would divide the nature of the Godhead, and separate between the God of the law and of the gospel.<sup>6</sup> In the following century, Cyril of Jerusalem affirms the identity of the Holy Ghost who spake by the prophets and who dwelt in the apostles, and says, Let no man divide the Old from the New Testament, or say that the Spirit in

<sup>1</sup> Dialog. cum Tryphone, c. 119.

<sup>2</sup> Apologia, i., c. 36.

<sup>3</sup> Strom., lib. iv. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Strom., lib. vii. 16.

<sup>5</sup> Tertullian, De prescriptionibus Heret.

<sup>6</sup> Origen : Hom. in Titum, iv. 10.

the one is different from the Spirit in the other; else he offends against the Holy Ghost Himself.<sup>1</sup>

(2.) But the current and ordinary style in which the Scriptures are spoken of and characterized, affords another class of testimonies in favour of the harmonious belief of the catholic Church in the infallibility of the sacred volume. The evidence from this source is all the stronger that it is oftentimes indirect and incidental, emitted not for the purpose of proof, but uttered as the spontaneous and almost unconscious belief of the writers as to a matter of fact too commonly known and accepted to require any proof.

In the first epistle of Clement of Rome to the Corinthian Church, one of the earliest genuine remains of Christian antiquity, he again and again quotes passages of the Bible, accompanied with the words, 'The Scripture saith,' 'The Holy Ghost saith,' and equivalent expressions; and he speaks of its statements as being the true words of the Holy Ghost.<sup>2</sup> In the supposed epistle of Barnabas, another of the apostolical Fathers, we find, when quoting from Scripture, similar phraseology employed: 'The Lord hath declared unto us by the prophets,' and, 'Thus saith the Lord by the prophets,' 'Moses in the Spirit spake.'<sup>3</sup> Irenæus declares that we follow the true God alone as our teacher, and that His words are the rule of truth.<sup>4</sup> The author of the anonymous fragment upon the canon, known by the title of the Canon Muratori, and belonging to a date probably not later than 170 A.D., tells us that everything concerning the birth, suffering, resurrection, and conversation of our Lord, is declared in the Gospels by one and the same presiding Spirit.<sup>5</sup> Hippolytus, the disciple of Irenæus, when speaking of the sacred penmen, says: Be assured they did not speak in their own strength, nor out of their own minds, what they proclaimed; but first by the inspiration of the word they were rightly imbued with wisdom, and then by visions they truly foretold the future; and then with a sure

<sup>1</sup> Catechesis, xvi. 4.

<sup>2</sup> Clementis, Epist. ad Corin. i. 45.

<sup>3</sup> Barnabæ, Epist. 1, 9, 10.

<sup>4</sup> Irenæus: Contra Hereses, lib. iv. 35.

<sup>5</sup> Routh: Reliquiæ Sacræ, vol. iv. 3.

faith of the things, they declared and predicted what by the divine power was made manifest to them.<sup>1</sup> Tertullian, in quoting the language of the Apostle Paul, accompanies the quotation with the statement: The Spirit of the Lord pronounces by the apostles. Origen, in reference to the words of the same apostle, declares that it is good to adhere to him as unto God and the Lord Jesus Christ, and to draw wisdom from divine Scripture according to his teaching.<sup>2</sup> Cyprian, as his usual manner of quoting from Scripture, accompanies the quotation with some words that indicate its divine authority and inspiration; as when he tells us that the Holy Ghost speaks in the divine Scriptures, or when he declares that the Holy Spirit warns and speaks by the apostles.<sup>3</sup> And Jerome accuses heretics of transferring their faith to novel doctrines and ferments of the Pharisees and commandments of men, after having formerly believed the Scriptures, which have been written and edited by the Holy Ghost.<sup>4</sup>

(3.) Negatively, not less clearly and strongly than positively, the early Christians have made manifest their belief in the absolute purity and truth of the sacred volume. By their constant denial of error or contradiction in its pages, they have borne testimony to the faith of the Church in its divinely given infallibility.

Speaking of contradictions in Scripture, Justin Martyr says, that he cannot dare to think or assert there are any; and that if any passage be adduced that seems to be of that nature, and to afford a pretext to allege that one scripture contradicts another, so persuaded is he that there can be no such contradiction, that he will rather confess that he does not understand it.<sup>5</sup> In a similar spirit of confidence in the perfect infallibility of the Scripture authors, Irenæus declares that the apostles are disciples of truth, and beyond all falsehood.<sup>6</sup> Dionysius of Alexandria bears testimony to the same

<sup>1</sup> De Antichristo, vii.

<sup>2</sup> Hom. in Leviticum, v. 3.

<sup>3</sup> De Opere et Eleemosynis; De unitate Ecclesiæ.

<sup>4</sup> Com. in Micham, vii.

<sup>5</sup> Dial. cum Tryphone, lxxv.

<sup>6</sup> Contra Hereses, lib. iii. 5.



effect when speaking of the apparent contradictions in the Gospel narrative of the resurrection. He tells us not to imagine that the evangelists either really differ from or contradict each other.<sup>1</sup> Origen found, in the allegorical methods of interpretation, and in the spiritual meanings which he believed were hidden under the letter of Scripture, a means of solving to his own satisfaction the apparent difficulties perplexing to others. When speaking of the discrepancies of the Gospel narratives, he says, that if they were all brought out he would be made giddy, and either cease from endeavouring to confirm the Gospels as true, and, making his choice between them, adhere to one only, not daring wholly to overthrow faith in our Lord; or, accepting all the four evangelists, would judge that their truth lay not in their outward letter or fleshly character.<sup>2</sup> The distinction between uninspired and inspired writings is strongly asserted by Augustine, who assures us that they are different, and the former are to be accounted as spoken by men themselves, while the latter are to be regarded as spoken by God through them.<sup>3</sup> The testimony of the Church affirmatively to the divine original and infallible truth of Scripture, is confirmed by its negative witness against the possibility of error and contradiction in the original text.

Whatever may be the value of the opinion of the post-apostolic Church as evidence for the fact of inspiration, there can be no doubt as to the existence of it expressed in every variety of language, and with a united utterance. The exceptions to this unanimity are apparent rather than real, and can hardly be regarded as to any extent detracting from it. Those passages quoted from the writings of the early Church, and adduced in support of the idea that the Fathers held a doctrine of inspiration short of supernatural and plenary, can for the most part be explained in entire consistency with Scripture infallibility. In the case of men so widely separated in views and character—making use of language in a popular

<sup>1</sup> Routh : *Reliquiæ Sacræ*, vol. iii. 357.

<sup>2</sup> Com. in *Johannem*, tom. x. 2.

<sup>3</sup> *De civitate Dei*, lib. xviii. 38.

rather than in a polemical and dogmatic sense—and speaking often incidentally in reference to a question not directly before their mind when they spoke, and which had not been examined and defined in the light of opposing opinions, it is impossible to imagine that there will be found no exaggerations or inaccuracies of expression. But such exceptional statements can mostly be explained upon principles fairly applicable to such cases, and in consistency with the common opinion of the Fathers as to inspiration.

*First,* The belief of the primitive age in inspiration is not contradicted by the fact, that in some passages of the early Christian writers they speak of themselves or others as being the subjects of it. The opinion prevalent during the first centuries of the continuance of miraculous gifts generally in the Church, and especially of the continuance of a supernatural guidance vouchsafed in the interpretation of Scripture and the insight into divine truth, is not inconsistent with a devout belief in the supereminent authority of Scripture. They might and did err as to the subjects of the supernatural influence, while there was entire faith in its results. The author of the Shepherd of Hermas plainly lays claim to inspiration in his own person, while at the same time there is the unqualified recognition of Scripture.

*Secondly,* The largest and most unreserved admission of the individuality of the inspired man while under the influence of the divine power, and the denial of the unconscious and involuntary exercise of speech and pen, when possessed by the Spirit of God, are perfectly consistent with the opinion of inspiration in its most rigid form. At all events, it is certain that many of the early ecclesiastical writers assert both in the plainest language, and have no sense of any inconsistency between them. Irenæus, who may be taken as an adequate representative of the faith of the early Church, speaks in strong terms of Paul using hyperbolical language, through the rapidity of his spirit and the impetuosity of the Spirit.<sup>1</sup> But the personal peculiarities of the human instrument

<sup>1</sup> Contra Hereses, lib. iii. 5.

impressed upon his writings did not, in the estimation of Irenæus, interfere with their divine authority and truth; for he distinctly teaches the latter as much as the former. Many of the passages that have been quoted from the Fathers as evidence of their views of inspiration, are nothing but evidence that they held the perfect consistency of the human and divine element in inspiration, each in its integrity.

*Thirdly*, The acknowledgment of unsolved difficulties and apparent discrepancies, that cannot with our present knowledge be harmonized, forms no contradiction to the opinion of plenary inspiration held by the Fathers. In the case of Origen, as we have already seen, we have statements that cannot be misunderstood, asserting the doctrine in its most complete sense; and yet, at the same time, and without prejudice to these assertions, he confesses that, in relation to our Lord's last Passover, there is an apparent contradiction which is not capable of being harmonized. Origen did not feel himself justified in assuming that what we cannot explain is inexplicable, or that there may not be corruptions in the transmitted text not belonging to the original, and introducing actual discrepancies into it. He did not see any inconsistency in maintaining both plenary inspiration and the existence of apparent contradictions in the text. Such-like acknowledgments, occurring in the early ecclesiastical writers, cannot fairly be quoted as evidence of their opinions as to inspiration.

*Fourthly*, The belief of the catholic Church in the infallibility of Scripture is not discredited by the circumstance that there was an unhesitating recognition, on the part at least of some, of imperfections of language in the sacred volume, not touching the truth of its statements. In the case of Jerome, whose bent of mind and studies led him especially to mark, and perhaps overestimate, the importance of grammatical defects, we find the free and almost irreverent ascription to Scripture of imperfection in expression and style; imputing without scruple to the inspired penmen solecisms in language.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Comment. in Ep. ad Eph. iii.

But, at the same time, Jerome held, and without doubt saw no inconsistency in holding, that Scripture was written by the Spirit of God. To adduce passages from the Fathers asserting imperfections in grammar and language in the Bible, furnishes no evidence, and no presumption even, that they denied its infallibility.

*Fifthly*, The harmonious testimony borne by the early Church to the fact of inspiration, is not invalidated by the occurrence of many passages in the writings of Christian antiquity, acknowledging in the most ample way difference of language and view, in recording the same facts and announcing the same doctrine, manifested on the part of two or more of the sacred penmen. In proportion as a critical attention was directed to the point, such an acknowledgment came to be more fully made by the very men who held the highest views on the subject of inspiration. In the question of the evidence that we have for the opinions of the early Church, it is a matter of no consequence whether such an acknowledgment could or could not be made consistently with the fact of plenary inspiration. The advocates of the infallibility of the Bible believe that it can; and the best evidence that can be given that the Fathers believed the same, is the fact that we find such acknowledgment in their writings side by side with the assertion of the infallibility of Scripture. In the face of such a fact, we are not entitled to say that the writers feel any inconsistency; nor are we required in consequence to deny the testimony that they bear to inspiration, and to set aside the statements that assert it. A number of the passages usually quoted in evidence of low views of inspiration, are to be explained on this principle.

*Sixthly*, The actual occurrence of occasional and exceptional passages in the wide but fragmentary literature of the ancient Church, adverse to the notion of strict inspiration, and not to be explained upon any of these principles, would not of itself affect the common testimony of ecclesiastical writers, or even bring into doubt the opinion of some of the very men who are alleged to have produced them. In voluminous

writings, composed oftentimes hastily for practical and not dogmatic purposes, and dealing incidentally with questions not directly before the mind of the writer, it is hardly possible to expect entire consistency in any man, especially in the instance of doctrines not formally defined or precisely expressed in the teaching of the Church. If there be looseness or uncertainty of language in some of the Fathers when speaking of inspiration, it is only exceptional, and easily to be accounted for on this principle, without imputing to it a sense that would make it contradict their other statements, or the beliefs of the catholic Church.

Between the time of the Christian Fathers and the date of the Reformation, there were no opinions on the subject of inspiration differing greatly from those previously held, or to which much value could be attached. On the part of the schoolmen of the middle ages, there was indeed a tendency in connection with inspiration, as in connection with other doctrines, to run into subtle speculations leading in the direction of giving to it a greater minuteness of definition, and a more formal and dogmatic shape. But it cannot be said that their teaching effected any alteration in the creed of the medieval Church on the point, distinct in the result from what had been accepted before.

Among the mystics that sprung up during the middle ages, there were found influences pointing in the opposite direction. Their general subjective tendencies, and belief in communion with God, not through the intervention of the written word, but by the special illumination and revelations of the divine presence within, very naturally and unavoidably led them to disregard or undervalue the supernatural inspiration of specially elected prophets, and to reduce it to the level of that common and gracious teaching found in all Christians alike. The light within, as asserted in their creed, was hardly consistent with the Christian doctrine of peculiar inspiration as belonging to apostles and prophets. But the exceptional opinions of the pietists and mystics of the middle ages did not seriously affect the views of the Church at large.



With the Reformation, however, the doctrine of inspiration came far more prominently into view. The authority of the written word of God, as in opposition to all other authorities, whether public or private,—the Bible, the infallible standard of truth and rule of belief to the individual and to the Church,—became to a large extent the question of controversy between the adherents of the ancient faith and the Church of the Reformation. The Spirit of God, always present in the infallible decisions of the Church and in ecclesiastical tradition, was set over against the same Spirit present in the infallible word of Scripture; and the controversy arising out of this contrast of belief led to the very verge of a discussion that cannot properly be exhausted without a searching inquiry into the grounds, nature, and limits of inspiration. The pressing exigencies of the Reformation crisis did not afford time indeed to its leaders fully to enter into such a wide investigation. They were contented for the time with asserting and maintaining the position of the supreme authority of Scripture, and its sufficiency for salvation, in opposition to tradition and Church authority on the one hand, and the private light of the mystical school on the other, without discussing very formally or minutely the question of inspiration. Still, from a very early period in the history of the Reformation, there were tendencies manifested in connection with this latter topic, the full development of which was not seen until long after.

In the case of the Church of Rome, there has been an unwillingness manifested to assert strongly or to define accurately inspiration as belonging to the sacred volume. The Council of Trent, while exalting the apocryphal books and ecclesiastical traditions to the same rank as the Scriptures, has abstained from offering any definition, or indeed any deliverance, on the subject of inspiration. Even when the question of partial or plenary inspiration was raised in the controversy between the Jesuits and the Theological Faculties of Louvain and Douay<sup>1</sup> in 1588, and afterwards referred to the decision of the Pope, his judgment was one that did not commit the

<sup>1</sup> Hagenbach : *History of Doctrine*, ii. 233.

Romish Church to either view, and left it very much as an open question not to be accounted as fixed by authority. And since that time, while there has been no want of diversity and even opposition of opinion among Popish writers on the subject, the majority, among whom are Bellarmine and others of their highest authorities, have lapsed into views inconsistent with the infallible inspiration of the Bible.

Within the pale of the Protestant Church there soon emerged a difference in opinion, which has subsisted with growing divergence ever since. The one principle of the singular and supreme authority of Scripture found its natural expression in the views of Calvin and his followers in the Reformed Churches with respect to inspiration. They served themselves heirs to the faith of Augustine and the early Church in the complete infallibility of the Bible; while as to the manner in which the doctrine was held, and the explanation to be given of it, their definite and systematic views of all divine truth led them to give it a more dogmatic shape and formal expression than it had received before. In the writings of Calvin himself there is the fullest recognition of the human element in the sacred volume, along with an unequivocal assertion of that divine control over the instrumentality employed in composing it which secures it against error. But there is also a wise abstinence from speculative views as to the theory of inspiration, and no presumptuous attempts in the way of defining the manner in which the supernatural result of an infallible text was brought about.

The same abstinence from hypothesis in explaining the doctrine was not observed by some of Calvin's followers in the subsequent discussions that arose concerning it; and in their teaching we observe a tendency to make the divine element in inspiration to supersede the human, and to reduce the inspired man, when under the influence of the Spirit, to the level of an unconscious and unintelligent instrument. The language of the Formula Consensus Helvetica in 1675, and of some theologians about the same period and afterwards, who maintained the cause of Scripture inspiration, can hardly be accepted in

consistency with the fact of the complete freedom and individuality, in the exercise of their proper powers, of the inspired writers. And yet it is difficult to believe that the purely mechanical hypothesis of an entire suspension of will and intellect and consciousness in the prophet, so much akin to the Montanist heresy in the early Church, was ever seriously entertained by many of those divines whose language might seem consequentially to lead to it. On the contrary, in the case of some at least, there is distinct evidence that, whatever their theory might logically imply, they truly held by the idea of the conscious individuality and intelligent co-operation of the inspired man under the power of God's Spirit. They only furnish an example of how one side of a truth earnestly advocated, to the total exclusion of the other, may, unconsciously to the advocates, assume much of the appearance, and have some of the effects, of error. This extreme, in the direction of the denial or subordination of the human element in inspiration, with which the language of some of its advocates is chargeable, is only another illustration of the peril to which men are exposed, who, not contented with believing in the result of the divine agency, are tempted to the hopeless endeavour of understanding and explaining the means of it.

But within the area of Protestantism there was a divergence on the opposite side, and still more dangerous. The character of Luther's mind and the tendencies of his theology, both of them more subjective and less scientific than Calvin's, did not lead him to give the same prominence to Scripture as an objective standard of truth and source of authority. His treatment of the canon of the New Testament, and more especially of the Epistle of James and the Apocalypse, was remarkable. But more remarkable still were the grounds of evidence on which he ventured to exclude these writings from their proper place among the authoritative records of revelation,—grounds which really involved the principle that the internal character of a book, judged of by a man's own spiritual apprehensions of what is right or wrong in a supernatural revelation of truth, was

itself sufficient to decide the question whether it was inspired or not. Such opinions could not co-exist with strict views of inspiration. Although he never very distinctly or accurately defines his own position as to the doctrine generally, yet it is certain that the sense in which he held it was not inconsistent with practical error and imperfection in the sacred page. In this respect he was imitated by a considerable number, although by no means all, of his followers, in the German section of the Reformation. Under the authority of his name, and encouraged by his example, views of partial and not plenary inspiration began to prevail.

These beginnings in the Church of less strict belief in the supernatural accuracy of Scripture, were reinforced by no inconsiderable accession of opinion from without. The spirit of free inquiry, so inseparable from the Protestant movement, had, in its abuse, and especially in the shape of disregard of all outward authority, no small effect upon the advance of views hostile to inspiration. The progress of Protestantism carried with it both beliefs and habits of inquiry into scriptural truth, in which reason, rather than the authority of God in revelation, was the ultimate judge. The effect of the writings of Spinoza, and of his views on religious matters, was to leaven the mind, to some extent, of the Church, and still more of those beyond its pale, with rationalistic tendencies. Grotius lent his authority, as Erasmus had done before, to arbitrary distinctions, which divided between what in Scripture was given by the Spirit to the authors, and what they were sufficient of themselves without His aid to embody in writing; leaving the one portion to rest for its credibility on the testimony of God, and the other on the validity and trustworthiness of the powers of the uninspired writers. The efforts of critical investigation, which after the revival of letters had been turned in the direction of the Bible,—the more searching attention paid to the different manuscripts and various readings of the Scripture text,—the minute and accurate comparisons instituted between the sacred history and other historical monuments,—served to bring into greater promi-

nence the difficulties attaching to the inspired writings, and to raise questions which had not been raised, or were thought to have been answered, before. Along with the discovery of new difficulties in the record, there came the application of new methods of interpretation to meet them; and critics, the exponents of every system except that of a plenary inspiration, were let loose upon the text. More recently, the reaction which has been witnessed in the department of speculative inquiry against positive thought and dogmatic teaching, and the general prevalence of subjective tendencies in philosophy, have had their share in rendering men indisposed to accept an objective standard of belief, or to submit to outward authority in questions of moral and spiritual truth. The tendencies of opinion outside the Church have lent their aid to influences within, since shortly after the Reformation period, to pave the way for lower views as to the authority of Scripture.

Notwithstanding of the high views on inspiration announced in the Helvetic Confession, and in the writings of many divines<sup>1</sup> who held similar sentiments during the latter part of the seventeenth and the early part of the eighteenth centuries, there was a strong and growing party within the Church who advocated opposite opinions. Episcopius, and a large body of the Arminians or Remonstrants in Holland, approximated in their notions to the rationalistic views of the authority of Scripture entertained by the early Socinians. Their opinions found expression in the letters of Le Clerc, professing to exhibit the sentiments of certain Dutch theologians on Simon's Critical History of the Old Testament,—letters which, when republished in this country, called forth various replies and criticisms by divines both of the Church of England and of Nonconformist churches, which showed the change that had come over the views of many as to Scripture inspiration. In almost all, if not all, of these

<sup>1</sup> Quenstedt, *Theologia Didactico-polemica de Scriptura*; Gerhard, *Loci Theologici*; Buddeus, *Institutiones Theologiæ, De Scriptura Sacra*; Calovius, *Biblia Novi Test.*; Hollazius, *De Sacra Scriptura*.



replies the high ground occupied by the primitive Church and the Church of the Reformation, in receiving the Bible as the one undivided and infallible authority in matters of faith, is virtually surrendered, and the lower ground of a partial inspiration is advocated; distinctions are taken between the form and the substance, the historical and doctrinal contents of Scripture, and a less degree of the divine element is apportioned to the one, and a greater to the other. Before this time, the rationalistic principles of Lord Herbert and his successors had not only largely influenced the tone of religious sentiment throughout England, but impaired to a fatal extent the spiritual life of the Church itself. The state of feeling and opinions induced had unconsciously modified the Church's creed, so that the apologists of the faith were content to yield up no small part of what was formerly believed, in defending the remainder. The deistical school of England was the parent of the infidelity of France and of the rationalism of Germany; and, as in England, its principles had no small influence in lowering the beliefs of the Church in both countries as to inspiration. The rapid change at home and abroad has in many quarters left little to conserve of the ancient doctrine of the infallibility of the Bible.

The tide of change in recent times, while setting in against the opinion that acknowledges the very truth of God, and nothing else, in the record of His revelation, has run mainly in two different channels. The change itself has been marked by the introduction of certain theories in connection with inspiration which were unknown in the Primitive and Reformation Churches, and which have been introduced for the purpose of explaining or accounting for the results as they are alleged to be found in the Scripture page. So long as the Church held by the belief that the Bible was all, and equally throughout, the infallible word of God, there was no theory or explanation needed beyond the explanation that it was the result of the one supernatural act of God in embodying His own truth in the Scripture record. But when

views of partial inspiration became prevalent, and the Bible was held to be partially or unequally inspired in its various parts, there was a necessity laid upon the adherents of such views to furnish some intelligible explanation of the different results in the different portions of the record. There was a necessity for the invocation of some theory or other that would account for the distinctions alleged. These theories, as they have been propounded by the advocates of partial inspiration in recent times, may readily be ranged under two classes.

The first theory was brought out in the controversy originated in this country by the work of Le Clerc, impugning the strict infallibility of Scripture, and asserting the existence of error more or less in the record. Previously to this time, distinct theories of inspiration were hardly known in the Church; the denial of all error, and the assertion of infallibility in the sacred page, rendered them unnecessary. But the ground taken by the apologists who replied to Le Clerc's attack shut them up to the necessity of theorizing: they admitted the existence of inaccuracies and imperfections in the record, inconsistent with the notion of an equal supernatural perfection in it all; and in order to retain the idea of inspiration side by side with the admitted errors, they were forced to have recourse to the theory of an inspiration varying in degree in different portions of Scripture, and allowing of human imperfections and fallibility in some. To conserve the notion of an inspired book, in spite of the imperfections which they confessed to exist in it, they were compelled to lower more or less their standard of inspiration as respects those portions of Scripture in which errors more or less occurred, while retaining it in its integrity with respect to others. The different characters of Scripture itself, as doctrinal or historical,—as teaching essential or non-essential truths, as unknown previously to the writers or familiar to them,—furnished them, as they fancied, with the opportunity and the means of doing this; while they parcelled out a greater degree of supernatural inspiration to the first, and a lesser degree to the

second, class of passages. Hence the theory of degrees of inspiration which prevailed extensively in this country during the last century and the early part of the present, and was believed by its supporters to be not only consistent with the facts of inspiration, but also the best method of meeting the charge of error in the Scripture text without sacrificing entirely its divine character. The theory admits of various modifications; and the distinctions in the contents of the Bible, and in the degrees of inspiration appropriate to each, may be multiplied to a greater or less extent. Under one or other of its aspects it has been held by Lowth,<sup>1</sup> Whitby,<sup>2</sup> and Doddridge<sup>3</sup> in last century, and by Hill,<sup>4</sup> Dick,<sup>5</sup> Wilson,<sup>6</sup> Pye Smith,<sup>7</sup> and Henderson<sup>8</sup> in the present. It presents one of the forms which recent modifications of belief in inspiration have assumed, and evinces a marked departure from the simple faith in an infallible Bible which distinguished the earlier Church.

The second theory, expressing the views of modern adherents of a partial, as contradistinguished from a plenary and supernatural inspiration, is to be found best exhibited in the theology of Germany. Like the former, it starts from the admission of imperfection and error in the sacred text; but its explanation of these is somewhat different. The advocates of degrees of inspiration, measured out according to the character of different portions of the Bible, attempted to effect a reconciliation between the supernatural element and the human imperfection alleged to be found in the text, by limiting the former to those degrees which would permit error to be present where it was actually found, and exclude

<sup>1</sup> Lowth: *Vindication of the Divine Authority and Inspiration of the Old and New Testament.*

<sup>2</sup> Whitby: *Preface to Commentary.*

<sup>3</sup> Doddridge: *Dissertation on the Inspiration of New Testament.*

<sup>4</sup> Hill: *Lectures on Divinity.*

<sup>5</sup> Dick: *Essay on the Inspiration of the Holy Scriptures.*

<sup>6</sup> Wilson: *Evidences of Christianity.*

<sup>7</sup> Pye Smith: *Scripture Testimony to the Messiah.* Note.

<sup>8</sup> Henderson: *Divine Inspiration.*

it where it was not. They took for granted that, when inspiration was present in its integrity, error could not be; and that it was only by the limitation or exclusion of the supernatural element they could account for its existence in any part of Scripture.

But this second theory, which has prevailed especially in Germany, alters the character of inspiration altogether. Inspiration is no longer regarded as supernatural at all. It is not held to be the miraculous agency of God, exerted for the very purpose of supernaturally controlling human weakness and imperfection, and excluding human errors; with whose presence falsehood is inconsistent, and which leaves no room for anything but infallible truth. On the contrary, it is held to be the natural, or at most the gracious, agency of God illuminating the rational or the spiritual consciousness of a man, so that out of the fulness of his own Christian understanding and feelings he may speak or write the product of his own religious life and beliefs. The inspiration is entirely a subjective one,—the quickening of spiritual thought and feeling from within, not the presentation of supernatural truth from without; and it is no more inconsistent with error and imperfection in the inspired man, than are the opinions and writings of any Christian man equally advanced or matured in the religious life. Such a theory, by destroying the supernatural character of inspiration, as effectually reconciled its existence with the existence of error in the Scripture text, as did the first theory by limiting the supernatural, or excluding it in certain portions of the page.

This second theory, like the former, admits of many modifications, and has been stated in language considerably different. In the hands of Schleiermacher, the great representative in modern times of this school, it admitted of the existence of error to almost any extent in the Scriptures, and reduced them to the level of the religious authorship of ordinary Christians; the only distinction being, that the authors of the New Testament stood nearer to Christ personally, from whom

the magic influences of spiritual life emanated, than did other men. It admits of a somewhat stricter application when held by Neander, Nitzsch, Tholuck, and some of his disciples. But with them all, the fundamental principle of the theory is the same. Inspiration is regarded not as the supernatural work of God wrought to exclude human error, but as the natural or gracious agency of God common in a larger or less measure of it to all Christian men, and therefore perfectly consistent with human error to an indefinite extent. The modern theology of Germany, imbued as it is almost universally with this idea, stands out strongly contrasted with the beliefs of the post-apostolic and Reformation churches.

If there be any exception to the almost universal adoption of such a theory in the German section of the Church, it must be made in favour of opinions more hostile to supernatural inspiration still. There is no inconsiderable school of theologians who occupy even lower ground than that on which the disciples of Schleiermacher stand, and refer the contents of Scripture to the natural revelation (*revelatio naturalis*) common to reason in all men. And yet this can be regarded hardly as an exception; for the theories of the two as to inspiration are virtually and fundamentally the same. Those who, with Wegscheider in Germany and Parker in America, hold that the power by which the authors of the New Testament wrote, is nothing but the power possessed by all men in consequence of that truth of the Almighty which has given them their rational and moral nature, and actuates them in the exercise of it, differ in nothing from those who, with Schleiermacher and his admirers, hold that it is the power possessed by Christians under a common or gracious influence of God moving their religious consciousness, excepting that the one class assign inspiration to the natural, and the other to the religious nature of man, and in both cases alike, apart from supernatural guidance or control. The theory that makes inspiration to result from the exercise whether of his intellectual or of religious faculties, under the ordinary or the gracious action of the Spirit, apart from His



miraculous influences, is one of those elastic theories that will suit either extreme of opinion. It will suit the lowest naturalist, like Wegscheider, who saw nothing in the Bible but the product of human reason, mingled with the countless errors to which reason, in the case of illiterate men and in the infancy of a bygone age, was exposed; or it will suit the highest spiritualist, like Neander, who approximates in his estimate of the Bible to that holy fear and devout reverence which the belief of its divine and infallible truth imposes. It is a theory which finds no contradiction to its principles in the mythical methods of Strauss, and is consistent with the evangelical interpretations of Tholuck. Virtually it is the same in all; and in its application makes manifest a difference only in the more or fewer errors which it alike justifies in the sacred text.

This subjective theory of inspiration soon found its way into this country, and although not indigenous, may now be said almost to be naturalized. We are indebted to Coleridge, more than to any other, for the importation at first, and for the currency afterwards among ourselves, of forms of expression and thought in connection with inspiration unfamiliar to British theology, and derived from Germany. The influence of his name and school gained for them acceptance and prevalence both within and without the Church. Although the 'Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit,' in which he exhibits his views, contain no systematic or even very distinct or consistent exposition of the theory, yet it has been zealously advocated and disseminated by the remarkable body of men who sat at his feet and were trained in his habits of thinking; and Arnold, Hare, Maurice, and others, have, by their teaching, to no inconsiderable extent leavened with its principles both the theology and current literature of the day.

The writings of the English theologians, who have sought to enforce and illustrate this theory, have added to it nothing beyond what was inculcated by their German predecessors. In the case of Coleridge himself, the principle of a subjective inspiration, identical with that 'grace and communion with the

Spirit which the Church, under all circumstances, and every regenerate member of the Church of Christ, is permitted to hope and instructed to pray for,' is not carried out with the same consistency in reference to the whole of Scripture as is seen in the theology of Germany. He admits an exception in favour of the 'law and the prophets, no jot or tittle of which can pass away,' as having been inspired by supernatural agency, while the remainder of the sacred volume has been written under the impulse and guidance of that gracious influence of the Spirit common to all Christian men. But this inconsistency in Coleridge's views is not seen in the writings of some of his more advanced disciples. The supernatural element is wholly dispensed with in their teaching, and the system itself fairly carried out to its proper and consistent issues. Maurice refers the Scripture in all its parts to an inspiration the same as what every believer enjoys; and Macnaught, following out the logical results of the principle, believes the inspiration of prophets and evangelists to be nothing different from that ordinary form of the divine Spirit which breathes in the life and sustains the actions of the humblest of the irrational creatures.

Such a theory of course makes no exclusion of error more or less in the record of the New Testament, beyond what the gracious or ordinary presence of the Spirit with Christians or with common men makes. If, on the one hand, the sacred volume is attributed to the gracious influences of God peculiar to Christians, it experiences an exemption from imperfection no farther than the faith or speech of all Christians is exempted. If, again, the Bible is attributed to the common influences of the Spirit, necessary to actuate the life and movements of all creatures, such a theory must embrace within it the possibility of all the errors to which men are liable. In either case, it is identical in principle with those views which distinguish the theology of Germany, and which differ among themselves in respect only of the greater or less extent of imperfections which different modifications of the same theory respectively own in the inspired record.

These two systems,—a supernatural inspiration limited as to its degrees and its place throughout different portions of Scripture, and an inspiration not supernatural, but due to the ordinary or the gracious influences of the Spirit common to all, or at least to Christian men, and elevating their rational or religious nature throughout the whole of the authorship of Scripture,—are the leading theories of those who in recent times deny the plenary inspiration of the Bible. The former theory has been advocated chiefly in this country, but is now less generally adopted. The latter has been the prevailing view abroad, and has also found numerous adherents among ourselves. They both are almost equally hostile in principle to the idea of the complete infallibility of Scripture; they both admit of manifold modifications in the extent to which they may be carried in their application to the sacred volume; and they neither of them embody in themselves, or otherwise provide, any test by which to decide how much of it is due to the agency of God, and how much to the imperfection of man.

One noticeable peculiarity distinguishes them both, from the views of the early and the Reformation Church, over and above the denial of Scripture infallibility. For the first time in the history of the question, we find the systematic and formal introduction of gratuitous *theory* to explain the nature or define the limits of inspiration. In the simplicity of that early faith which led the primitive Church to believe that it heard the voice of God Himself speaking through His own word, in the voice of Scripture, there was no necessity for explanatory theories, and indeed no possibility for their introduction, any more than in the case of any miracle of power which God had ever wrought. The supernatural explanation excluded any other, rendering it both needless and impossible. It was only when men began to deny, either in whole or in part, the presence of the supernatural power of God in the passage of the Red Sea, or the miracle of the manna in the desert, that it was necessary or possible to look about for theories of these events which should explain them, either

partially or wholly, on natural principles; and so, in like manner, it was in reference to inspiration. So long as, in the history of opinion on the question, we find the miraculous element unreservedly admitted, and the complete infallibility of the inspired page asserted, there is a marked absence of theory in the statements of divines, because there was felt to be no call for explanation, and especially no room for it.

The analogy of the musical instrument to the inspired prophet, so often introduced in the writings of the primitive Church, was hardly anything more than a rhetorical illustration handed down from one author to another, and was not meant as a formal explanation, and still less as a restriction of the methods of divine power. The similitude of the pen to which the human author, under the influence of the Spirit, was often likened in the more formal teaching of theologians in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries who are supposed to have approximated to the denial of the human element in the authorship of Scripture, approached nearer to the nature of a theory of inspiration; although in some instances certainly it was meant to apply as an explanation of the result effected, and not of the divine mode of effecting it. It was reserved for modern times to witness formal theories, explanatory of the divine process in inspiration, laid down and adopted,—theories which became necessary, and indeed possible, only on the assumption that inspiration is either in part or wholly natural, and not supernatural; and which are intelligible or useful only because they serve to explain what is human and fallible in Scripture, and is not miraculously given and guarded from error. The theory of an inspiration of different degrees in different parts of Scripture, is an attempt to explain how the supernatural element was limited in amount, or totally excluded in certain passages, so as to be consistent with the existence of the human imperfection alleged to be present in them. The theory of an inspiration not supernatural at all, but due to the ordinary or gracious action of the Spirit on the rational or religious nature of man, is an explanation whereby the whole difficulty of error

in the Scripture record is superseded, and inspiration itself, so called, is made to be fallible and human, not infallible and supernatural. The side from which such theories regard the sacred volume is one unfriendly to its divine authority. They are altogether of modern origin. Inspiration is not a word of yesterday, but as ancient as the New Testament, and in substance and essential meaning coeval with the Old. It is only those theories of inspiration that are modern which have been framed and broached under the necessity felt by their adherents of explaining in what sense and way it is to be understood to be partial, not plenary, and to be fallible, not supernaturally free from error.



## CHAPTER V.

### STATE OF THE QUESTION—REVELATION.

It is a remarkable feature in recent theological discussions, and one indicating a time of transition in the history of religious opinion, that ancient words no longer represent the ancient things that they before expressed ; having so much changed their sense and applications as to stand for ideas very different from what they signified formerly. The technical and established vocabulary which theology had made for itself, has been revised and remodelled to such an extent that orthodoxy hardly knows its familiar words, when applied to opinions very far from orthodox, according to the former understanding of the term ; or employed to introduce and facilitate a change to new views, when no change is felt, or at least confessed. There is no subject to which this remark more applies than to the fundamental questions of revelation and inspiration. It is all the more necessary that, in entering upon a discussion in regard to these, we readjust our ideas of the terms we employ, lest, under the shelter of an ambiguity in the use of language, the state of the question in dispute may be misapprehended, and the conditions of the problem to be solved be shifted and erroneously laid down.

Looking back to the history of opinion in the past, these two propositions taken together exhibit, as we believe, the substance of the immemorial and all but universal doctrine of the Church of Christ in regard to the inspired Scriptures. In *the first place*, they contain a communication of truth from God supernaturally given to man ; and in *the second place*, they contain that truth supernaturally transferred to

human language, and therefore free from all mixture or addition of error. These two propositions express the well-nigh unanimous opinion of Christians in former times, after their opinions are analyzed and separated from those non-essential illustrations or theories with which they have sometimes wisely or unwisely been explained; and from a few personal and exceptional beliefs easily to be distinguished from the common faith of the catholic Church. They express also the whole substance of the truth in connection with this matter which the Scriptures themselves affirm, when they plainly assert their own claims to the belief and obedience of man, but by their silence scrupulously avoid any declaration as to the process of inspiration, or the *modus agendi* of the divine power in controlling the mind and pen of the Scripture writers; and they embody or imply the whole of what we mean by the assertion that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are all, and are alone, the inspired word of God.

Anything more than this it is not necessary for the defender of inspiration to affirm, for anything more is not essential to his position, and is indeed an encumbrance to his argument. There is no permission or warrant in what is revealed in Scripture to go beyond the simple ground: to venture further is to be wise above what is written, and to trespass into a province beyond the proper limits of human inquiry; and it is, moreover, to endanger the defence of a plainly revealed truth, by making it dependent on the unrevealed theories which, instead of serving to explain it, which they never can do, if it be supernatural, only tend to encumber its support. But anything short of this position is insufficient and defective. The two propositions, not separated,—the one being accepted, and the other denied,—but taken together, and equally recognised, are necessary to make up the true idea of an inspired Bible. That idea is rejected or mutilated in its proper significance and application to the sacred volume, when either the one or the other fails to be accepted in its complete integrity. A supernatural communication of truth from God, and a supernatural transference of that truth to human language, are the

two elements, the presence of both of which makes up, and the absence of any one of which destroys, the true idea of inspired Scripture. It is a mistake,—not certainly of equal danger or importance, but still a mistake,—in defending the doctrine of inspiration, to err on either side, and to fall short of or to exceed the two fundamental positions which, combined into one, constitute the scriptural view of the subject.

But, at the same time, while it is necessary to conjoin these two things as entering equally into the result which we witness of a divine and infallible record, yet it is plain that they are perfectly distinguishable in idea, and indeed not unfrequently separate from each other in point of fact, so that the one of them may be asserted while the other is denied. A supernatural communication of truth from God is a *revelation*; the supernatural transference of the truth to the spoken or written word is *inspiration*; and the distinction between the two things is one which has almost always been recognised by theologians, and often pointed out with more or less accuracy. Still the forgetfulness or practical disregard of the distinction has not unfrequently given rise to mistakes as to the proper adjustment of the question at issue between the advocates and opponents of inspiration, and it is therefore necessary that it should be rightly marked.

Revelation may exist without inspiration as well as in combination with it; and in fact is found apart from inspiration, in those cases referred to in Scripture in which revelations were made from God to individuals, meant for themselves alone and not for others, and which were never communicated to others at all, or communicated without the supernatural aid which would have excluded error or defect in the communication. We can easily conceive that the whole of the revelation given by God might have been given upon this latter principle; thus exhibiting an example of a proper and supernatural communication from God to the recipient; but a communication afterwards left to the chance of being made known wholly or partially, perfectly or imperfectly, to others by the purely natural powers of memory, judgment, and ex-

pression belonging to the prophet. This is quite a conceivable case; it is actually the case in the opinion of those who, admitting a supernatural message from God in the Bible, believe that the Bible itself is nothing more than a human composition. But as prophets received the discoveries of revelation not for themselves, but for others; as it was primarily intended not for the personal instruction of the parties to whom it was originally given, but of the many who were to take it from their hands; as it was more important by far that it should be transmitted in purity to the whole of mankind than to the few who were made the instruments of transmitting it, we would have been entitled, independently of the Scripture evidence for the fact, to argue with a high measure of probability that the revelation which was in a supernatural manner transferred from the mind of God to the mind of the prophet at first, would afterwards, in a manner not less supernatural, be transferred from the prophet to that infallible record from which it might shine upon the minds of others.

Still the two ideas of revelation and inspiration are quite distinct. In all those instances of fellowship and converse between God and any of His creatures, spoken of in patriarchal times, in which the divine communication was limited to the use alone of the party who received it, and which, though referred to, is not recorded in Scripture, we have the example of revelation without inspiration. In the many things which Jesus spake to His disciples, nowhere embodied in the evangelical narrative, and which are not recorded, because if they had, the world would not contain the books that should have been written, we have also instances of supernatural communications not supernaturally chronicled in writing. The distinction which has been drawn between revelation and inspiration is no merely gratuitous hypothesis, invented for the purpose of an arbitrary definition. It is a distinction laid deep in the different natures of the two things, and actually recognised in Scripture. The advocates of plenary inspiration believe that the two are conjoined in, and indeed are necessary alike to, an inspired Bible. But

they also believe that the two are separate, both in idea and in fact; and that, in order to a right understanding of the question of inspiration, the distinction must be kept in mind.

Restricting ourselves then, in the meantime, to the first of the two elements which combine to make up the idea of inspired Scripture, the question that meets us at the outset is, In what sense are we to understand a supernatural *revelation*?

In attempting to answer such a question, it is impossible to overlook the analogy suggested by Scripture itself, between the effect of a communication made by God to man, and of a communication made by one man to another. In the way in which it is described, and in the language applied to it, a certain measure of likeness is asserted or assumed between the result of God making known His mind and will to the prophet, and holding converse with him by revelation, and the result of a fellow-man holding converse with us in the way of communicating to us his thoughts and wishes. There are indeed obvious peculiarities in the one instance that are not, and cannot be, reproduced in the other; and, in so far, a divine revelation from the Creator to the creature must be unlike an ordinary communication from one man to another. The supernatural method and process of converse between the divine and human mind can be likened to nothing in the natural intercourse between mind and mind among men. But, setting aside the manifest peculiarities due to its supernatural origin and manner of being made, there is in the result itself a resemblance to a parallel communication from one man to another, that is plainly suggested by the language of Scripture, and indeed cannot well be overlooked. Within the limits obviously taught by a regard to the miraculous manner in which it is made, the analogy between the two will help us to understand what is meant by a revelation from God to man.

In the instance of a communication between man and man, we have the twofold phenomenon exhibited,—*first*, of the thought or truth to be communicated, as it originated in the mind of the first; and *second*, of the presentation of the thought or truth to the second of the two parties between whom the



communication takes place. These two things are all that are necessarily implied in the idea of a communication made by one human being to another. Nothing beyond these is essential. The medium of communication may be different in different cases ; the channel through which the truth is conveyed may be that of oral or written signs, or some other method of appeal, to the person receiving the communication. The reality of the communication does not depend upon the manner in which it is made. The conveyance from the one party to the other may be more complete or successful in one instance than in another ; the truth, transferred from man to man, may be more or less accurately apprehended and fully received in different cases ; or it may be misunderstood, and fail to be received at all. Still the communication itself is not to be identified or confounded with the apprehension of it on the part of the person to whom it is addressed : it is a real communication, whether he intelligently and fully receive it or not ; and it may be actually made on the one side, at the same time that it is rejected on the other. The only two ideas necessarily belonging to a proper communication made by one man to another, are these : *first*, the objective truth to be communicated ; and *secondly*, the presentation of that truth, through some adequate medium, to the party addressed.

In both these respects, the analogy between a divine and a human communication is strictly maintained. There is a parallelism, in so far, not interfered with by the confessed difference between the two cases in other respects. We have in the first place the truth or knowledge to be revealed, as it originated in and comes forth from the divine mind ; and in the second place we have the presentation of it, in some adequate manner or another, to the man to whom the revelation is made. In that mysterious converse which takes place between God and man, when the former conveys to the latter a revelation of His mind and will, there must be, as in the case of human converse, the objective truth, else there could be nothing to reveal ; and in this respect there seems to

be no ground to allege that there is any difference between God making Himself known to man by revelation, and men holding fellowship with each other in the ordinary interchange of thought. So also, in the instance of a supernatural communication between the Creator and the creature, the objective truth to be revealed must be presented in some manner fitted to convey the revelation to the party for whom it is intended, else he could not receive it himself, or be made an instrument of transmitting it to others; and in this second respect, also, there is no difference in the thing itself or in the presentation of the truth, although, for aught we can tell, there may indeed be a difference of a material kind in the *manner* of making the presentation, or between God's *method* of communicating with man, and man's *method* of communicating with his fellow.

The intercourse between mind and mind among men is kept up through the medium of outward symbols, for the most part vocal or written, and thought circulates from soul to soul by means of the interchange of language and visible signs. That such may possibly be the medium of communication between God and man in revelation, it would be presumptuous to deny; for Scripture has made us familiar with the idea of God adopting this very method of intercourse between Himself and man, and using human language, uttered to human ears. Above all, we have the wonderful fact presented before our eyes of God Himself in human flesh, for thirty years speaking in human speech, and holding fellowship with His creatures as man speaks with man. But still it were hardly less presumptuous to limit God to that one manner of revelation to prophets and apostles; or to deny that the infinite mind can communicate with the finite through any other medium, or even directly without the intervention of any medium at all. In a divine revelation, and in a communication between man and man, there must be equally the presentation of truth from the one party to the other; but the manner of that presentation may not be alike, and the difference belongs to the fact, that the one is supernatural and the other is not.

In like manner, there is a parallelism between a super-human and a human communication, in respect that each is wholly independent of the reception or understanding of it by the party to whom it is made. This latter does not belong to the essence of the idea, but is, strictly speaking, accidental to it. The truth presented, whether it be in a supernatural manner by God or in an ordinary way by man, may be more completely and intelligently apprehended by the party addressed in one case than in another; nay, while in some instances it may be appropriated and embraced as true, in others it may be erroneously interpreted, or repudiated as untrue. But this does not affect the reality of the communication made, which is independent of the belief or disbelief of the man to whom it appeals. In this respect, a revelation by God is precisely analogous to a communication addressed by one man to a second. Neither the medium through which it is presented, nor the acceptance which it gains for itself on the part of the person receiving it, are anything but accidents, not essentials of the communication. Whether it be between God and man, or between man and man, all that of necessity enters into the notion of it is simply these two elements,—namely, the objective truth to be communicated, and the presentation of it to the party addressed.

A more particular reference to the language of Scripture, in connection with the idea of a revelation from God, serves to bring out still more distinctly the same view, and to confirm the belief of a close analogy subsisting between a revelation and a communication made from one man to another.

*First,* The idea of revelation is not peculiar to Christianity or to the Christian records, although, generally speaking, presented in a special aspect in the sacred volume; nor is the ordinary term employed to signify a revelation (ἀποκάλυψις) found only in inspired writings. Taking the use of the word and its cognate terms as they are employed by profane authors, the primary meaning of it seems to be a communication of knowledge or truth of whatever kind from one party to another, whether they be human or divine. It is

certainly not restricted in profane authorship exclusively to a divine communication; and in the use of it, in common to truths made known, whether by God to man, or by man to his fellow, we have a confirmation of the idea that there is a near resemblance between a supernatural revelation from God, and an ordinary communication from one to another among ourselves.

*Secondly*, Even within the sacred volume itself, the use of the phraseology has a latitude that does not exclude truths or knowledge coming from other sources than a communication from God. In the great majority of cases, indeed, the words revelation and to reveal (*ἀποκάλυψις* and *ἀποκαλύπτω*) refer to a discovery made to man from God; but not so always. In the Gospel by Luke, the human thoughts and secrets within the mind of one man, when made known to another, are spoken of as a revelation; and that great historical fact of the rise and predominance of antichrist on the earth, when manifested before the outward eyes of men, is described in like manner as a revelation. This application of the phrase in Scripture to discoveries or communications not from on high, shows in a striking way the analogy between these and a proper or supernatural discovery made to us by God.

*Thirdly*, Although the words occur more than forty times in the New Testament, yet never, except in one or perhaps two instances, are they necessarily to be interpreted in reference to the subjective apprehension of truth *in* the mind, and not the objective presentation of it *to* the mind. With hardly more than the exceptional cases of Gal. i. 16 ('It pleased God to reveal His Son in me'), and perhaps also Eph. i. 17 ('The spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him'), they always express a discovery of truth from without, and not from within. When it is remembered that the reception or belief of a truth is so much the natural result of the presentation of it to the mind, and that words primarily expressive of the cause so often in their secondary sense come to represent the effect, the fact is all the more remarkable of the almost

exclusive use in Scripture of the term revelation to signify the objective truth, and not the subjective apprehension of it.

*Fourthly*, To limit still further the Biblical meaning and use of the word, we find it never employed in the sacred volume to express the discovery of truth which creation or outward nature gives. Another set of words (*φανερώσις, φανερώω*, etc.) is usually set apart to signify the manifestation of outward and sensible things in general, and especially the manifestation made of the truths of natural religion from the external universe. *Revelation* may, in some very few cases, be applied to visible things, but not to the visible things of God that declare His eternal power and Godhead.

*Fifthly*, Setting aside, then, the general sense of the word common to Scripture in some few cases and to profane authors, of a communication of knowledge, whether divine or human,—setting aside also the rare and exceptional instances in which it may be held to express the inward belief and not the outward truth,—we seem to be warranted in saying that the proper and normal meaning of revelation in Scripture, is that of truth supernaturally presented to man by God. Although the word is not peculiar to the Christian records, yet its Biblical use and sense are plainly to be distinguished from others. While there are features which it has in common with any ordinary communication made from one man to another which are most important to the right understanding of it, yet Scripture usage has appropriated and restricted it to one particular meaning; and it is only in this meaning that we can accept of it when dealing with the question of inspired Scripture.

Looking, then, to the manifest analogies which supernatural revelation presents to the familiar case of a communication from one man to another, and looking especially to Scripture usage in connection with the word, we can form a sufficiently distinct idea of its proper meaning. Revelation, as a divine act, is the presentation of objective truth to a man in a supernatural manner by God. Revelation, as the effect of that act, is the objective truth so presented. We find both uses of the word in Scripture: in the first case, the word denoting the



divine power directly operating upon the prophet; in the second case, the word expressing the result of that power in the truth made known.

There are various points in the definition that require to be looked at in connection with prevalent misapprehensions.

I. *First* of all, it is plain that the very import of the thing discountenances, or rather forbids, the attempt made by too many to explain the manner or form in which revelation was effected. If it were not supernatural, it would be a lawful and possible thing to inquire into the condition of the prophet when under the teaching of revelation,—into the principles or methods through which his mind was instructed in the thoughts communicated,—and into the manner and limits of the co-operation of his own powers in understanding or receiving the message of truth conveyed. All these things might be legitimate subjects for investigation, on the supposition that revelation was natural and not supernatural; but because it is, in the proper sense of the word, miraculous, it cannot be thus explained. From the very nature of the case, we must be contented to know nothing of the divers manners in which the divine influence came upon and overshadowed those holy men of old, who were set apart from others to be the depositaries of a supernatural message to their fellows. While the Scriptures have spoken distinctly and unequivocally as to the fact of the supernatural communication made by God to the prophet, they have furnished no intimation as to the way in which the result was brought about. There may have been various modes of revelation employed in various cases; and where it is impossible to explain the nature of any of them, it is equally impossible to deny that they may have been different. But we have no sufficient knowledge to assert that there was a difference, or to explain what it was.

No doubt there is a variety observable in the language of Scripture when speaking of revelations made to different parties. Sometimes they are described as if spoken by arti-

culate words from the lips of God, in the same manner as human speech is employed by men. At other times they are represented as given in dreams during sleep. At other times still they are spoken of as communicated in visions during the waking hours of those who received them. But if the miracle of revelation was to be described or asserted at all, it must have been spoken of under forms of representation and in language borrowed from the examples of those ways in which ideas are usually imparted to men; and it is not easy in some of those cases to say to what extent the language is anthropomorphic, and simply accommodated to human modes of thought and speech.

But even in cases where audible words were supernaturally spoken, or miraculous visions and dreams actually given to the waking eye or sleeping spirit, it affords no elucidation whatever of the mystery of the action of the divine power upon the prophet in revelation. All these modes of speech and representation bring us up to the point of the supernatural contact of the divine mind with the human mind in their mutual converse, and leave us face to face with the difficulty as helpless as before. The Scripture representations of the condition of the prophet's mind under the revelation of God, when they speak of him as in a trance, or in the spirit (*ἐν ἑκστάσει, ἐν πνεύματι*), furnish no explanation at all to make more intelligible the mysterious transaction. The miracle of revelation, even though expressed in human forms of speech and thought, is not in the least brought nearer to human apprehension. The variety of language and figure employed may serve to give manifold and diverse assurance to the mind of the reality of the fact, but it cannot cast light upon the nature of it. It is both a gratuitous and forbidden attempt to divide the supernatural power of God into artificial and purely hypothetical modes of action, and to endeavour to tell when the revelation came to the prophet by 'direct internal suggestion,' and when by 'audible articulate sounds,' and when again by 'Urim and Thummim,' and how often by 'dreams,' and at what time by 'visions,' and when once more

by the 'reappearance of the departed.'<sup>1</sup> Explanations of such a kind must always be hopeless, because attempts to make intelligible what must ever be mysterious.

When those divine truths which dwelt in the mind of God before are brought by revelation within the sphere of human knowledge, no account can be given of the fact except that it is supernatural: the nature of the condition into which the prophet's mind is brought, when made the subject of such a miracle, can no more be explained psychologically than the condition of body can be explained physiologically of the paralytic, when made the subject of the miracle by which he rose up and walked. It may be spoken of as it is in Scripture, when it is said, the 'hand of the Lord fell upon him,' or that 'the word of the Lord came unto him,' or that he was 'in the spirit.' But the endeavour to describe and analyze the nature of the prophetic condition,—to declare what faculties or powers of mind are suspended, and what quickened or elevated, by the divine power, when imparting the revelation,—and to represent the manner in which the mental state and circumstances of the prophet, in his time of vision, gave shape and colour to the truths communicated to him,—is certainly a proceeding consistent neither with sound philosophy nor with the reserve of Scripture upon the point. It is an error of a serious kind, when we make the supernatural revelation to be dependent, to any degree, upon the condition of the parties who received it, or in any manner identify the one with the other.

The mistake of the Montanists, who made the unconsciousness and suspension of all the intellectual and voluntary powers of the man necessary to the prophetic condition and power, is not more an error than that of modern theories of revelation, which make a certain condition of elevation and activity of these powers to be necessary, as if the revelation of God were impossible without it. If it be supernatural at all, it cannot be dependent either on the absence or on the presence of certain forms of co-operation of the activity of man. To

<sup>1</sup> Henderson: *Divine Inspiration*, p. 60.

classify the powers of our intellectual and spiritual nature, and then to point out which of them are essential or non-essential, and what exercise of them is appropriate or not, to the giving of a revelation by God, is certainly to trespass beyond the boundaries of a right science as much as of a right interpretation of Scripture. It may readily be granted that the divine mind may, through any or all of these avenues, find access for its own truths to the mind of man. But, apart altogether from the consideration that such theories are purely arbitrary and gratuitous, they leave the process of God, in unfolding His mind to the mind of the creature, a mystery as much as ever unexplained. Except in the case of the prophet himself, who has had actual experience of it, it is one of those matters which must ever lie beyond the ken of human observation. Even in *his* case, after having experienced it, the mode and the process of a supernatural revelation from God must remain supernatural as before. It cannot be explained or rendered intelligible by the suspension and inactivity of any or all of the natural powers of the man who is made the depositary of the communication from on high. It can as little be explained or rendered intelligible by the presence and active co-operation of certain rational or spiritual capacities, developed and illuminated in a gracious manner by the same Spirit that imparts the communication.

The desire to theorize on the question of revelation has led men to the verge of the absurdity of attempting to explain upon natural principles what is truly supernatural, and, in the failure of the attempt, has induced them to deny the supernatural character of the revelation altogether. If a direct communication to man from the eternal fountain of uncreated light be, in the proper sense of the word, a miracle, then no explanation of it on natural principles can make it more intelligible, and no want of such explanation can make it more incredible. If the questions be raised in connection with it, Is it necessary that such a revelation should be verbal, or is it impossible that it can be verbal? Is it necessary it should always be apprehended by the prophet, or is it not

necessary that it should always be apprehended in the act of being given?—the proper answer is, that we cannot tell what are the conditions appropriate or essential to a supernatural communication from God; that, in dealing with such a matter, we have gotten into a region beyond the reach of human inquiry; and that, for all that we know of it, we must be indebted to the information contained in Scripture itself. The affirmative or the negative of these questions may or may not be given us in the Bible: neither can legitimately be maintained to the exclusion of the other, except on the ground of what the Bible declares.

II. But there is a *second* point in the proper notion or definition of a revelation, which it is important to single out and mark, in connection with recent theories on the subject. According to the Scripture idea of it, it is a presentation of *objective* truth to the prophet altogether apart from the subjective apprehension or reception of the truth, and independent, indeed, of the intellectual or spiritual condition generally of the party entrusted with it. By this statement, it is not indeed meant to be denied that the objective communication made must be subjectively apprehended by the mind before it can be truly realized, and really accomplish the object of a revelation from God. But it is not to be forgotten that a man's understanding of a divine revelation is a very different thing from the revelation itself, and forms no necessary part of it; and that the objective truth presented to the mind would remain equally true and equally a communication from God although not apprehended or received at all. Especially, it is not necessary to the idea of a revelation, that it be understood by the party to whom it is first addressed; for it may be made to him not for his personal information or profit, but for another to whose mind it may convey truth not apprehended by the first.

All this is familiar to us in the analogous case of a communication made by one man to another. It may be a communication avowedly addressed to the person receiving it, not



for himself, but for a third party, for whose information it is primarily or even solely intended : the first receiver of it may imperfectly, if at all, understand the message which he is made the instrument to transmit ; and the meaning and object of the communication may be fully apprehended only after it has passed out of his hands, and been interpreted by another. In many instances it is not necessary, either for the object or completeness of the communication made, that the party first receiving it and then transmitting it to another, should himself fully understand the import of what he becomes the medium of conveying.

So it is in the communications made by God to His creatures. In many instances they were made not for the benefit exclusively of the parties to whom they were addressed : in all cases in which they have been put on record in the permanent form of a written revelation, they were meant for other persons and ages ; and generally it was a matter of less importance that they should be understood by the prophets commissioned to write them, than by the many in after times for whom they were written. Accordingly, we are expressly informed that many prophets prophesied, without themselves understanding the revelation made to them, and searched anxiously, though vainly, what, and what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify,—the very words that they uttered being intended, not for themselves, but for us, unto whom they did minister. The intelligent reception or subjective apprehension of the truths revealed, formed no necessary element in the revelation given, and was not even an invariable accompaniment of it. It was complete in itself, and perfect for the objects contemplated by it, independently of these.

We cannot doubt, indeed, that the solemn and awful privilege of entering into the secret of the Almighty, and receiving from Him messages of His wisdom and grace, was one fitted and intended to elevate the intellectual and moral nature, and to purify and ennoble the spiritual being of the prophet who enjoyed it. Such a nearness and intimacy of

communion with the eternal fountain of light were fitted to make wise the simple. And yet the supernatural communications of God were not always vouchsafed to men exalted above their fellows in intellectual and spiritual attainments, or even vouchsafed to men otherwise favoured of God at all. The striking variety, and contrast even, of character and endowment belonging to those to whom revelations were given, seem designed to teach the lesson, that the privilege was allotted and apportioned not according to any law of personal merit or attainment in spiritual things. The office of prophet implied an official, rather than a personal, intimacy and communion with God, and the gift of revelation was not restricted to those greatly blessed, or even accepted of God at all. Supernatural communications were made to men of all characters, in every variety of condition as to religious attainment and illumination, in different states of mind and feeling, and according to no ascertainable principle in respect of spiritual standing or superiority.

Revelations were given to Abimelech and to Abraham; to Pharaoh as well as to Joseph, to Nebuchadnezzar as well as to Daniel, to Sarah and to Sarah's maid. They were given to men who did not know what they uttered, or hated it; they were given to Balaam and to Caiaphas, when the curse was turned into a blessing, and unconscious lips that had spoken against Christ were made to prophesy in regard to Him. Looking to the actual history of the parties to whom supernatural communications were addressed, we are forced to confess that the mysterious intercourse with the Most High which distinguished them from others, did not necessarily belong to them because of their advancement in the spiritual life, and was not always accompanied with peculiar illumination in divine things. They were separated to God officially, for the purpose of becoming the organs of His revelation, but not personally set apart to the enjoyment of a higher spiritual teaching, or marked by a more devoted consecration. Nor, on the other hand, did eminence in personal attainments in the Christian life, or superior privilege of a gracious kind

enjoyed from God, give to the words or writings of the parties distinguished by these, any greater authority or credibility than those of others. John, the apostle whom Jesus loved, and who lay upon his Master's bosom, has in his Gospel no higher measure of authority than belongs to Mark, who was no apostle at all. And Paul, who was taken up into the third heavens, stands, as to credibility, on no level superior to that occupied by the other authors of the sacred writings. The gift of revelation was not necessarily connected with the gifts of grace; and the prophet was distinct from the Christian. When revelations ceased in the Church of God, and prophets failed, there remained behind, in the hearts of God's people, a teaching distinct and superior.

But in assigning to revelation the character of being *objective*, according to the only true and scriptural idea of revelation, much more is meant than that it *is not* to be identified with the subjective truths or beliefs in the minds of those who possess it. We mean also, that it *is* to be identified with the truths and beliefs which dwell in the mind of God. Negatively, revelation is not the same thing as the discovery of truth native to man himself, and having its source and home in his rational and spiritual nature. Positively, revelation is the same thing as the very truth that is native to God, and has its source and home in the storehouse of His eternal wisdom.

A revelation objective, or from without, and given to man from a source not in himself, but from on high, is totally different from a revelation subjective, or from within, and given to man out of the depths of his own being, and from a source to be identified, in one way or other, with his own rational or spiritual nature. In the first case, it is truth coming to man from the fountain of truth, and linking man's understanding and heart to the wisdom that is from above; making him partaker of its divine fulness and infallible certainty. In the second case, it is truth coming to man from the uncertain discoveries of his own rational inquiry or spiritual insight, making his fallible nature to be its own teacher, and

its erring dictates to be a revelation to himself. In distinguishing broadly and markedly between these two things, we are not guilty of resting in a merely verbal distinction of no practical moment. On the contrary, it is a distinction which involves the whole question, as to whether we shall have a revelation which contains a discovery to us of the thoughts and feelings of the eternal God, or a revelation which contains a discovery of the thoughts and feelings of man, taught, it may be, in the school of nature or of grace, but taught only in part, and receiving the lesson not without imperfection and error. Objective thought, revealed from the heart of God, must carry with it the infallible truth and divine authority of God. Subjective truth transferred from the heart of man, whatever discoveries he has made in divine things, must be characterized by his fallibility and imperfection. A revelation from within is no revelation at all, according to the true meaning of the word and the scriptural representation of the thing. Such a view would make revelation to be given of man, instead of given to him.

A moderate acquaintance with the history of opinion in recent times, is sufficient to convince any one of how very far modern speculations in theology, both at home and abroad, have advanced in the direction of setting aside the doctrine of a revelation from God in the only true and Bible sense of the term. In the controversy as to the kind and degree of authority due to the sacred volume, the divergence of opinion between the advocates and opponents of an infallible Scripture begins at an earlier stage than at the question of its inspiration. It oftentimes begins at the question as to whether the Bible contains a revelation at all.

The plain and intelligible position of the English deistical school during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who made nature and reason to be the only source of truth, and held the Bible to be no revelation, has in substance been revived under the disguise of modern speculation, while the name of deist is disowned as obsolete. We need scarcely refer, as examples, to the extreme section of rationalists in

Germany, who, with Wegscheider,<sup>1</sup> hold that a supernatural revelation is inconsistent with the idea of God, and that the 'revelatio naturalis' due to man's unaided discoveries in religious things is the only guide to truth. Accepting the Bible, after being purged of the supernatural, as being to some uncertain and indefinitely small amount the product of such discoveries, Theodore Parker, instructing us from the other side of the Atlantic, tells us that 'there is no difference but in words between revealed religion and natural religion;' that 'all men have direct access to God through religion, conscience, and the religious sentiment, just as we have direct access to nature through the eye, the ear, or the hand;' that 'through these characters, and by a law certain, regular, and universal as gravitation, God inspires men and makes a revelation of truth;' and that 'the inspiration, like God's omnipresence, is not limited to the few writers claimed by the Jews, Christians, and Mohammedans, but is co-extensive with the race.'<sup>2</sup>

Even the school of Schleiermacher, of which it has been boasted that it was the main instrument in elevating the religious life of Germany from the depths of extreme rationalism, makes revelation to consist not in the Bible, but in Christ,—meaning by that, not the words that He spake or the doctrines that He taught, but in His person; and the New Testament is no more a communication from God through His selected servants, than are the writings of any other Christians recording their religious views and sentiments,—with this advantage on the side of the sacred writers, that they stood in closer proximity than others to Christ, and came under the nearer effect of His personal influence. The disciples of Schleiermacher in this country make the Bible to be the product of the spiritual life and beliefs of its authors, illuminated and taught by the gracious influences of the Spirit in the same manner as every child of God is instructed and enlightened at the present day. Francis Newman, and a section still more in advance, have made the discovery that a

<sup>1</sup> Wegscheider : *Institutiones Theologicæ*, p. 57.

<sup>2</sup> Parker : *Discourses on Matters pertaining to Religion*, p. 161, etc.



*book revelation* is a contradiction in terms ; that an 'authoritative external revelation of moral and spiritual truth is essentially impossible to man ; and that what God reveals to us He reveals within, through the medium of our moral and spiritual senses.'<sup>1</sup> And Mr Morell, proceeding in the same direction, asserts that 'the Bible cannot in strict accuracy of language be called a revelation, since a revelation always implies an actual process of intelligence in a living mind ; but it contains the records in which those minds who enjoyed the preliminary training or the first brighter revelation of Christianity, have described the means which awakened their religious nature to new life, and the higher ideas and aspirations to which that new life gave origin.'<sup>2</sup>

Now all these theories, differing partially among themselves, have yet a family resemblance, and point in one direction. They bear very obviously and nearly upon the subject of inspiration, but at the same time raise a question which must be settled one way or other long before we can reach the point of inspiration. They raise the question as to the reality of a revelation in the only sense in which the Scripture understands the word, and claims to be a revelation. When unambiguously stated, and carried out to their legitimate issue, they one and all of them amount to a contradiction of the article which lies at the foundation of the Church's creed in every age, and which declares the Bible to be a proper revelation from God in the true and ancient sense of the words. Whatever minor differences exist between such views, they agree in this, that they embody a denial of the objective character or element in revelation, making it wholly a subjective thing, and constituting man, and not God, the source of truth to himself. Under the teaching of such theories, the Bible is seen to contain a revelation of knowledge *ab intus*, and not *ab extra*,—a discovery by man himself of, it may be, religious truth, but not a communication of truth supernaturally granted from on high. Come from what quarter

<sup>1</sup> The Soul, by Francis Newman, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> Morell : Philosophy of Religion, chap. v.

of his spiritual and intellectual being the discovery may, and aided by whatsoever happy and favourable training in the school of nature, or even of grace, still these doctrines virtually make man, and not God, the *revealer*, if revelation it is to be called at all. We may be indebted for the religious knowledge which has found its way into the Bible from the authors of the Bible, to the *light of reason* which belongs to them and to all, according to the opinion of the extreme rationalists, or to the *Christian consciousness* of the German school, or to the *religious sentiment* of Parker, or to the *spiritual insight* of Newman, or to the *religious intuitions* of Morell; but from whatsoever similar source, or under whatsoever dissimilar name it comes to us, it is *human* truth, and not *divine*.

It is not necessary to dwell on the wretched and insecure foundation for faith which such opinions furnish, when they represent fallen man as the great teacher to himself. It is quite plain that no partial amendment of the more extreme views of some of these theorists, by the introduction of the influences of the Spirit of God, such as are common to all Christian men, will suffice to redeem them from utter rejection. The Christian consciousness, or the spiritual insight, or the religious intuitions, may be originally developed, and subsequently elevated and maintained, by means of that gracious power of the Spirit from on high, which is shared by believers and not by others; but this only raises up the theory from a lower depth to a level still exposed to the same objection. The products of such an illumination, however great, in the shape of religious knowledge or discernment of divine truth, can never be named as possessing the same certainty or authority as the proper revelations of the Eternal Word. The special influences of the Spirit common to all Christian men, are not the same as the supernatural communications of truth from God given to prophets and apostles; nor are the discoveries of spiritual things, which are the result of the former, of the same infallibility with the revelations embodied in the latter.

In those gracious operations of divine power which work in believers for the purpose of leading them into the truth, and keeping them in the truth, so that they shall never fatally or finally fall from it, we can discern no adequate substitute for that supernatural power that, coming from afar and descending upon holy men of old, shut them up within the secret place of the Most High, and filled them with His word. As little still can we recognise, in the thoughts and feelings of Christian men written down in a book, even in the case of those who know the word of God and err the least, that uncreated wisdom of His which dwelt with Him from eternity, and which, at sundry times and part by part, was embodied supernaturally in human speech. A revelation of truth that has not come from its ancient and distant dwelling-place in the bosom of the everlasting Father, but has welled up from the inner springs of our own being,—subjective and not objective, and identical with the thoughts and beliefs and feelings of man, and not the thoughts and beliefs and feelings of the only wise and only true God,—is not a revelation in the old and orthodox sense of the word.

The defenders of the supreme authority and plenary truth of the Bible, are at least entitled to define their own language, and, having done so, to offer what reasons they can in support of their views. In asserting revelation to be the presentation of objective truth to man in a supernatural manner by God, they are at least borne out by the traditions and creed of the catholic Church from time out of mind; and, better still, they are borne out by the language of Scripture itself. They are not disposed to accept, under the name of revelation, what is no proper revelation at all, and which, if accepted, were not worth the defending. They are not disposed, under the ancient name, to receive a new system which would repudiate all that is objective in revelation, and cut off the prophet from the everlasting and only unerring source of light, and constrain him to draw from the recesses of his own being the knowledge of divine things, and make the Bible the child of his religious feelings and discernment only,

and compel others to seek acquaintance with saving truth from the recorded experience of a spiritual but erring man like themselves. The question is as to a matter of fact, and must be so dealt with.

In composing that book which we call the Bible, did the penmen write down in it a transcript of the thoughts of God, given them miraculously by God; or did they solely write down a transcript of their own, originated, it may be in part, and shaped imperfectly, by that special but not supernatural illumination of the Spirit which it is given to every Christian man in his measure to enjoy? Was their eye turned up to the fountain of uncreated light for the truths that they wrote, or turned only inward upon their own Christian experience, as the exclusive fountain of knowledge to them? In thus stating the question as between an objective and subjective revelation, we do not need to burden it with the further inquiry of whether or not the prophet who wrote the revelation given to him, understood it himself, and made the divine thoughts his own before recording them. It may or may not have been so. In some instances, indeed, we know, both from the express statements of Scripture and also from the nature of the matters revealed, that the sacred penmen did not fully apprehend the revelation, and were left like other men to their own unaided resources to study and inquire into the meaning of what they wrote. It is an error, then, to identify the objective truth presented to the prophet by God with the subjective apprehension of its meaning, which those who recorded it in Scripture might or might not possess. The transcript, in the sacred page, of truth, taken fresh from the divine mind, is a very different thing from the transcript, in the sacred page, of the perfect or imperfect apprehension of it taken from the mind of the writer. The record in the one case contains a revelation in the true sense of the word; in the other case it does not. The question, as regards the Bible, is not one of phraseology; it is a question as to a fact.

Dealing with the question in this manner, we find no difficulty in bringing the debate to a short and decisive issue. A

supernatural revelation given by God, and contained in the sacred volume, is the first of the two elements that enter into the idea of an inspired Bible. Without this we could have no inspiration in the sense or form in which we hold it as belonging to the Scriptures; and a mutilated or imperfect idea of revelation must necessarily lead to the denial of inspiration. Truth supernaturally given by God is as essential to the proper notion of the Bible, as the same truth supernaturally recorded. And the question between the friends and opponents of plenary inspiration, comes, in the first instance, to be, whether we actually have in the Bible a miraculous communication of truth from God, or a discovery of truth coming from the rational or spiritual nature of man himself. Under whatever forms of new and unfamiliar language such a question may be stated, it is in substance nothing but the old and well-worn debate as to the reality or not of a proper and true *revelation*; it is the controversy as to whether or not God has, in days past, and on various occasions, supernaturally broken the silence of heaven, and sent His word unto men. The exclusive claims of a subjective revelation, so called, cannot consist with the claims of the Bible to be regarded as a supernatural revelation from God; and this latter question must be settled as a question of fact before proceeding further.

Let us deal with this point as a question of fact, and apply to it those principles and methods of evidence by which alleged facts are proved to be true or shown to be false. Let us judge the claims of the Bible, if need be, by the application of the criterion of internal evidence to its contents, and by the test of its adaptation to the intellectual and spiritual nature of man; within such narrow limits as internal evidence ought properly to be restricted to. Let us try it by other methods of proof, historical and otherwise, to satisfy ourselves whether or not the Bible actually contains a supernatural communication of truth from God. And if it shall turn out that it does so, then, this one point established, it must be held as setting aside the exclusive claims of an internal or subjective revelation, under what-



soever name or form it is presented to us. There cannot be any compromise upon this point, or any *via media* between a proper revelation from God in the Scripture sense of the word, and the denial of it. The Bible is God-given or it is man-given; and the short and certain way out of the difficulty or ambiguities of a subjective or internal revelation, is just the ancient proof that God has at sundry times and in divers manners spoken unto the fathers by the prophets; and that the supernatural word upon the earth, like the word of a king, must put to silence or rule the lesser oracles of reason and conscience in man.

III. But there is a *third* point connected with the proper idea or definition of revelation to which it is necessary to advert, in the light of recent discussions. In affirming that the Bible contains a supernatural communication of truth from God, we make no distinction between different passages of the sacred volume, or different portions of its contents, as if one were more or less of a revelation than another, or as if some were and some were not a revelation at all. The general fact of the existence of a supernatural revelation, in the proper sense of the word, may be admitted while it is limited to certain departments of Scripture, and to a certain kind of Scripture truths, and denied to others. And the question is a very important one, both generally and in its bearing upon the debate as to inspiration, whether or not we are warranted and required to recognise within the Bible itself a distinction between some of its facts and statements as, strictly speaking, constituting a revelation from God, and others of its facts and statements as not entitled to that character or appellation.

The distinction introduced during the latter part of the last century by Töllner,<sup>1</sup> between the *word of God* and the *Bible*, is one that has been extensively adopted and variously applied; and it has become common to assert that the word of God is contained in the Bible, but is not identical with the

<sup>1</sup> Hagenbach: History of Doctrine, vol. ii. p. 406.

Bible itself. Of course, this idea may be exhibited in various forms, and applied in greater or less extent to the sacred volume. It has been employed in the way of limiting revelation, properly so called, to certain departments of Scripture truth, to the exclusion of the remainder ; so that with respect to some facts or truths embodied in the sacred page, and not to others, the name and character of a supernatural communication from God may be allowed.

The distinctions in Scripture statements broached in connection with this idea, have been very various and very ill defined. The difference between what is fundamental and non-fundamental has been a difference sufficient to induce one class of theorists to ascribe the character of revelation to the first, and to deny it to the second. The difference between the substance and the form of Christian truth has supplied ground to another class to act in the same way. The difference between what is doctrinal and historical in the contents of the volume has led a third class to assign the one to a supernatural origin, and the other to a human. And, once more, the difference between what was or might be known to the sacred penmen from other channels of information, and what was not or could not be so known, has been a reason with another class to deny to the former and to give to the latter the character of a revelation from God.

This last distinction attempted to be drawn between what in Scripture was previously known to the writers of Scripture, and those portions of its contents which previously were either unknown to them or undiscoverable by them, has been very extensively accepted, and used freely to discriminate between what is a revelation and what is not in the volume of the Bible. The whole range of those facts recorded in Scripture which came within the scope of the observation or knowledge of its authors, is thus brought under the operation of a principle which deprives them of the character of a revelation from God. Those historical narratives which might, through the independent investigation of the writers, or through the study of uninspired records, have been com-

posed and written down in Scripture, are no less struck off the list of communications supernaturally given by God. Even those truths which reason or conscience, in their search after divine things, may have taught to the sacred penmen, are upon the same principle excluded from the category of revealed truths. It is somewhat startling to be told, not by the opponents, but by the friends of inspiration, that the Acts of the Apostles<sup>1</sup> and other such historical portions of the Bible are no part of the revelation of God; because the occurrences narrated were either known or might have been known without such extraordinary teaching. It is no less remarkable to be taught from the same quarter, that the Psalms are to be distinguished from what is more properly styled revelation, for a similar reason, and because they record feelings and sentiments which the author himself had known and experienced,—being pictures of the inward life of man.<sup>2</sup>

In the view of such results, it is important to inquire whether the nature of revelation itself, and especially whether the Scripture account of it, requires or justifies the adoption of such principles, and compels us to enter within the precincts of the sacred volume with distinctions which separate its contents into different and opposite portions, to some of which the character of a revelation from God is allowed, and to others of which it is denied.

A very slight consideration is sufficient to show that, so far as regards the sacred volume, and the question of its character as a supernatural communication from God, such distinctions have no real existence, and cannot be applied except by an arbitrary and entirely hypothetical method of criticism, which would constitute each man's reason or religious instincts the arbiter.

The distinction between fundamental and non-fundamental truths is one that may, in a general way, be useful and necessary for some practical purposes, but is insufficient to discriminate in any true manner between what is and what

<sup>1</sup> Lee: *The Inspiration of Holy Scripture*, p. 30, 3d edition.

<sup>2</sup> Lee, p. 289, 3d edition.

is not a revelation from God. The attempt to draw a line through the Scripture page, separating the less from the more essential facts and doctrines, under the direction of such a guiding principle, could lead only to hopeless confusion and endless variety of result; while it practically installs man himself into the seat of the judge qualified to decide what is and is not infallible truth. The distinction between the substance and the form, the spirit and the letter, of Christianity, is quite as much indefinite and impracticable as a ruling principle to divide between those portions of the Bible which are revelation and those which are not, —the two being so incorporated into one in the texture of the record, that it is impossible to put them asunder without destroying both. The distinction between doctrines and facts, by which others have sought to reach a satisfactory discrimination in the matter, has to an important extent no proper existence, when, as in the religion of Christianity, its doctrines are often identical with its facts, and its facts with its doctrines; and even in those cases where this cannot be alleged, the two are so closely and intimately united together as to form an organic whole in the record, so that it is impossible to conceive of them as disunited, or as coming from opposite sources in the act of being recorded. Once more, the distinction drawn between what was previously known to the sacred writers and what was unknown is a real distinction, but one in regard to which we have no such information as to enable us in many instances to say what belonged to the one class and what to the other; and a distinction, therefore, that in our hands is useless to discriminate between what is given by revelation and what is not given, even were the known and unknown not so incorporated in the narrative, and combined into one statement or doctrine, as to render the separation impossible.

These distinctions, relied upon as guiding principles to enable us to parcel out the facts and truths of Scripture into revealed and not revealed, are either unreal, or inapplicable to the object in view. They are distinctions either without

any practical difference, or with a difference so general and indefinite, as to leave it to the arbitrary discretion of any one to use and apply them as he likes. In a matter so practical and important as the difference between truth revealed and not revealed by God, even were there no other objections to the theoretical distinctions drawn, it would be objection enough, that in their application to the sacred volume they are impracticable.

But there is a more important objection that must be taken to distinctions, of the kind alleged to exist, in the contents and the record of the sacred volume.

The Scripture use of the term revelation, and the account given of what is implied under it, justify us in asserting that it is to be taken in the sense of a supernatural communication from God, in no ways restricted to any particular class of facts or truths, to the exclusion of others, but equally embracing all, of whatsoever character they be, that are recorded in the Bible. Looking exclusively to the language and statements of Scripture itself, there is, with a very narrow exception, no ground whatever for assigning the name or character of revelation to any one of its facts and truths, which there is not for assigning it to them all; and conversely, there is no ground whatever for excluding any of its facts and truths from the category of a revelation, which there is not for excluding them all.

The exception to be allowed to this general proposition is to be found in the peculiar case of assertions of fact or doctrine made directly by God Himself in Scripture, or when its authors expressly tell us in so many words, that they have God's authority for the particular fact or doctrine. From the form of the sacred record, and the manner in which the revelation is embodied in it, we have very few instances comparatively in which God declares facts, as it were, from Himself, or enunciates truths immediately out of His own lips. The indirect, and not the direct, form of announcement is employed throughout almost the whole of Scripture: the Most High is seldom introduced as the speaker, constituting Himself the



personal narrator of facts or immediate teacher of doctrines; the facts are narrated and the doctrines taught by the writers themselves, while only in particular instances is there adjoined for confirmation, '*I the Lord have spoken it;*' and both the historical and dogmatic contents of the Bible are believed to be, all and each, *revelation*, not because God in every part directly addresses us, but because, under whatever forms of indirect speech, in the shape of history and didactic teaching or otherwise, the written communication is set forth, we are convinced that all has His authority when recorded there by His servant.

Had the prophet, or the evangelist, or the apostle the supernatural commission and gift of God to write in His name? This is the question which, if answered in the affirmative, gives to all that they wrote the character of revelation, apart from the shape, direct or indirect, in which it may have been embodied, and apart from any particular forms of speech which, in special instances, may tell us that God, and not another, is the personal speaker. The divine authority and ability to write, which were given them of God, cover everything that they have recorded in Scripture, and cover it equally with the sanction of the Most High; and therefore constitute not particular passages, or a certain class of truths to the exclusion of others, a revelation, but constitute them a revelation all alike. Setting aside the exceptional instances in which God is Himself the speaker, or in which, in reference to particular announcements, there is added, '*Thus saith the Lord,*' the same evidence that we have for any one truth declared in Scripture being a revelation, applies with equal force to every other; and in the statements of the Bible itself there is no reason for excluding one fact or doctrine, whatever it may be, from the category of revelation, which would not as certainly exclude the rest. If all the books and all the parts of each book, uncorrupted and unmutilated, which are usually accounted to belong to the canon, have a right to their place there, it is impossible, without playing fast and loose with the evidence that accredits all alike, to deny to one portion the

character of revelation while assigning it to the remainder. The use and meaning of the term, as applied in the New Testament, give countenance to no such arbitrary limitations as would, to the exclusion of the rest, restrict it to certain classes of facts or truths embodied in the one homogeneous and equally authorized record.

But if there be nothing in the Scripture representation of a revelation, but the reverse, to justify us in restricting the name to certain parts of the record, or to particular kinds of fact or truth, and denying it to others, neither is there any reason, in the nature of a divine communication, judging of it by its analogies to a human, to countenance such an idea.

In the case of a man making a communication to another, there are no such distinctions known or observed as those which would partition it into fundamental and non-fundamental, the spirit and the letter, the substance and the form, the didactic and the narrative parts, in such a way as would make the one competent and belonging to the communication, and the other not. Even the distinction between what was known previously to the person to whom the communication is made, and what was not known, is applicable only in the case of communications intended for the information alone of the person addressed, and not intended for others; and applicable even in that case with important exceptions. When, especially, a communication made to one is meant for a third party, and assumes the form of a message to others, it must oftentimes contain matters of fact and truth perfectly well known to the person originally addressed. It may frequently be of no importance comparatively whether or not the party to whom the communication is entrusted understands fully the import of it, if he understands it enough to be the bearer of it to others for whose information it is intended. Further still, there are cases in which it may be desirable that the person receiving the message for another should be kept in ignorance of its contents, and when it is couched in such terms as to make it unintelligible to the former, while perfectly intelligible to the latter.

All this is familiar to us in the instance of communications between man and man. And here, as in other particulars, we find a close analogy between these and the communication made to us by God. That communication belongs to the class intended for the instruction and benefit not of those to whom the communication is given, but of third parties. And it is not wonderful, in such a case, that we should find in it facts and truths previously known to the prophets originally privileged to receive it; but receiving it not for themselves, but for the information of men in other times and lands, who were to be made acquainted with them.

The history of our Lord's life and death could not have been transmitted to other men and generations, had the evangelists not been commissioned by God to record in their narratives many things of which they were previously cognizant from other quarters. And if it be granted that they were divinely commissioned to write these familiar facts, it will be very difficult, if not impossible, to distinguish between the divine suggestion of the facts as matters selected for recording, and the divine presentation of the same facts as matters of revelation. The divine selection of the truths given to be recorded by the sacred penmen, and the divine commission and ability to record these and no other,—and these in their true sense, and not under the mistaken aspect in which they might have been apprehended by the writers,—are acts of power which, because supernatural, cannot be separated, in our understanding of them, from supernatural revelation itself. If we are to judge by the analogies subsisting between a human and a divine communication, it is no strange or absurd thing to allege, that the depositary of a revelation from God may have presented to him, for the purpose of being transmitted to others, facts and truths familiar to him before. And if it be admitted that there was a divine commission given to the prophet, pointing out the selection to be made of the things to be written, and pointing them out in their true and not untrue character and bearings, it will be

very difficult to distinguish such a concession from the admission of a proper revelation.<sup>1</sup>

But there are familiar cases, in the intercourse between man and man, where, even although the communication may be intended for no ear but that of the person addressed, it may be proper and necessary, and indeed is quite common, to embody in it facts and truths perfectly known before. The Psalms of David, with their heartfelt confessions of personal unworthiness, and exulting declarations of the blessedness of the divine favour,—those pictures, so true, of the sorrows and joys of the human heart under the teaching of sin and grace,—have been denied the character of a divine revelation, because it is held to be impossible with God to have communicated or represented to the writer the facts and truths of his own personal experience, reproducing them before his mind, that he might record them for the benefit and instruction of the Church in future ages. And yet this republication to the individual himself by another, of the facts and feelings of his own felt experience, is no unfamiliar thing at all, if we are to judge by the analogies of common life.

How often may a father with a child, or a friend with a friend, do the very same thing among ourselves when alone together, with none else to hear; and for the purpose of conviction or reproof of sin, the warning voice may go over one by one, and recount transgressions well known, and broken resolutions readily remembered, and experience of evil too familiar, and vows violated but not forgotten by the party addressed! And how often, after a time, when the child or the friend shall have turned from his sin, and had experience

<sup>1</sup> Butler seems not to have been aware of any difficulty, such as has been strongly urged in recent times, in conceiving of a proper revelation of truths previously known to the parties to whom the revelation is given. He held very decidedly the reality of natural religion, and of a knowledge of divine things, competent to man from reason and conscience. And yet he lays it down as one of the advantages of the Christian revelation, that it is a republication of the religion of nature; and further, 'that revelation is an *authoritative* publication of natural religion, and so affords the evidence of testimony for the truth of it.'—Analogy, Part II. ch. i.

of the peace and blessedness of reconciliation with Heaven, may the same voice, still warning, but now also encouraging, speak once more for the purpose of confirming and strengthening him in the path of obedience, and tell over and reproduce to the anxious spirit its own familiar remembrances and experience of forgiveness and grace never to be forgotten, and reveal to itself, as it arises, its well-known and ever-present feelings of hope and strength in God! Surely it would be no strange sequel to such an interview, if the convinced sinner or the confirmed penitent were, from his own impulse or at the suggestion of his teacher, to arise and put on record, for the benefit perhaps of some companion in similar circumstances to his own, the picture of his own inward life thus held up to his eye, that, if possible, it might speak through the eye to the heart of another that he might seek to reclaim or strengthen like himself. We could well understand the meaning and object of such a revelation, were there none other to hear it than the party to whom it gave back nothing but what he knew before. We could understand them better still, if the revelation was written down that it might benefit others also. We cannot see why the record of the spiritual experience of the psalmist may not be a similar revelation, with this difference, that it is given of God.

Looking, then, to what a revelation is, whether judging by the Scripture account of it, or judging by the analogies of human things, there is no ground, but the reverse, for the distinctions that would divide the Bible into many parts, and many kinds of truth, and say of some that they are revealed, and of others that they are not.

Apart, indeed, from Scripture, and finding no support from any analogy, there have been reasons of a theoretical kind assigned for these distinctions, and especially for the distinction drawn between what was known to the sacred writers from other sources, and what could not be known to them except by revelation from God. Perhaps the only reason that can be given, certainly the strongest that has been given, is, that it was unnecessary by a supernatural act



on the part of God, to communicate facts and truths to the writers of Scripture, for the purpose of being embodied in the record, that were known, or could be known, to them by natural means. Such an act is held to be an exercise of miraculous power, impossible, or at least uncalled for.

In estimating the value of such an objection, it must be remembered that it arises solely from our own belief or theory of what the circumstances are that justify or demand an intervention of supernatural power on the part of God; as if we could, by any possibility, constitute ourselves competent judges of when miracles are superfluous, and when not. The objection must always remain a merely theoretical one.

In addition to this, it cannot be forgotten that the advocates of a true and proper revelation, co-extensive with Scripture, and not merely contained in limited portions of Scripture, deny that any of the facts or truths referred to as previously known from other sources, can be taken by themselves, and apart from those others, unknown and undiscoverable by man, with which they are associated in the sacred record. The known facts or truths were revealed, not for their own sakes only, but for the sake of the unknown with which they are associated, and the new lessons of a spiritual kind they are made to teach or illustrate. The commonest and most familiar truths of Scripture, which might, *in one sense*, have been written down there without supernatural revelation, derive their chief value from their connection with doctrines which no unaided powers of the writers could have apprehended or discovered; a connection therefore which, in order to be understood, must have been revealed. It is impossible to believe that there is a single fact or truth in Scripture, however minute and apparently trivial, which stands alone, and to be valued for its own sake merely, and not rather as bearing upon, and indeed an essential part of, the history of redemption.

The truths of natural religion have been republished in revelation, not because reason and conscience did not publish them before, but because reason and conscience could not tell their relation to the doctrine of grace. The very fact

of a God, written before the eyes of men in creation, has been written in the volume of revelation, not because it was unknown before, but because it was unknown in its new relations to salvation. The common events of our Saviour's human converse with them on earth, which the eyes of His disciples saw, find their place in the record in connection with truths which their understandings could not, unaided, span. The humblest occurrence chronicled in the Bible is not without an object mightier far than itself, and has been admitted into the page for all time, not by accident or by human foresight, but because of its bearing upon an end that is divine. Whatever might be the value of such facts or truths in themselves, and when known previously to the Scripture authors, they could be understood aright only when given by revelation in their bearings on, and connections with, the great object of all Scripture and supernatural revelation.

That such facts, and not others, among the untold multitude that might have been written,—that such truths, and not different ones, among the countless variety known to the authors, have been chosen,—that such facts and truths, from the beginning of time down to the day of Christ, have been ranged in their order and bearings, in their proportions and relations, as converging to and finding their consummation in Him, and have found their place in Scripture as they have done, is itself a miracle not less than any which it has recorded. Such a selection and condensation of materials, rightly made and rightly recorded, even although every one of them had been known and familiar to the writers before, would have been supernatural, and could not have been brought about without a revelation from God. So far as regards both the intention of God to give any fact or truth a place in the record of His revelation, and the actual place it was to occupy in its relation to others, every fact, the commonest and most familiar to the writers previously, was in strict language unknown to them; and it could become known in these respects, and for the purpose of being inserted, only by means of a supernatural communication from above.

It is not true, then, that a supernatural revelation of well-known and familiar truths was unnecessary for the purpose of enabling the Scripture writers to put them on record as we actually have them in Scripture. The very selection had to be communicated by God; and if the selected materials, although known previously from natural sources, were to be represented in their real character and bearings, and not in those in which they had been imperfectly or erroneously apprehended before by the human authors; if they were to be chronicled historically and doctrinally from God's point of view, and not from man's, there can be no distinction drawn between such a supernatural selection of truth made for the writers, and a supernatural presentation of truth to the writers, except in name.

But, perhaps, there are more obvious reasons still to be adduced to prove the difference between a revealed and an unrevealed Bible. They could not have been the same in respect of the divine truth of what they record. They could not have been the same in respect of its divine authority.

If there be any number of facts, however few, or any class of doctrines, however unimportant, contained in the Bible and not revealed by God, they may rest on the evidence of its human authors as certified by them, and be true as witnessed by their veracity; but they cannot be true as, in addition to that, resting on the word of God, and confirmed by His truthfulness. The assertion of such a distinction in the contents of the sacred volume, is fitted at once to raise the question of the source from which its various facts and doctrines are derived. If they come from the infallible fountain of truth by revelation, then the transcript of them found in the sacred volume, if itself free from error, must be infallible too. If they come from the fallible source of knowledge in the bosom of men, however competent in information and trustworthy in statement, they want that additional witness which is from above, and superior to any testimony that man can give.

In urging such a view we have no reason or temptation to

undervalue that common historical veracity which characterizes the Bible in common with many other books, or to deny the credibility which belongs to its statements, in virtue of the testimony which its authors, as eye and ear witnesses, were competent to give to them. Such testimony is an evidence and a foundation for belief of the highest value. Though it were in such parts unrevealed instead of being revealed, it could claim with reason our confidence.

But if, in addition to having this historical credibility, it be in the proper sense of the term a revelation from God,—if we believe it to be so, not only because of human testimony, but because of prophecy fulfilled in its favour, and internal witness commending it to our conscience, then we are introduced to a new and additional source of confirmation, lent to it not by the evidence common to it with other histories, but by the evidence peculiar to it as a revelation from God. We do not reject or impair the value of the one when we recognise the other as added to it for confirmation and support. An unrevealed Bible may be historically true; a revealed Bible is not only historically true, but it is also true because, added to the veracity of man, we have the veracity of God. We may believe the facts, because evangelists and apostles saw and handled them; but we will believe them with still surer confidence when, over and above that, we know that the mouth of the Lord hath spoken them. The two testimonies, although combined in favour of the same facts, as they often are in Scripture, are not to be confounded or identified. They are contributed from different quarters; they may rest upon different grounds: for, receiving the Bible as containing a message from heaven, because of its internal evidence, apart altogether from the human testimony involved in its external or historical proof, we may confess of a truth that its statements are the statements of God, and so accept its facts immediately upon His veracity, independently of man's. In such a case we have a double word in which to believe; and one of them is the word of God.

But in the case of a Bible without a revelation, it is not

only that the statements of its human authors, however veracious, cannot carry with them the infallibility of God, but also that these statements, however weighty, cannot carry with them the divine authority.

In a certain sense, indeed, all truth, of whatever nature it be, whether natural or revealed, comes to us from God, and on that account is entitled to claim and receive the belief and submission of men. But there is a claim which supernaturally revealed truth has on our faith and obedience, altogether different from any that truth coming from the discoveries of nature without, or reason and conscience within, can have. A revelation from on high, both because of its special character as a message to men from God, and because of the express commands which accompany it, has a right to demand an empire over the understanding and conscience which no communication of truth coming from any other quarter possesses. The truths taught me by my fellow-man, the truths taught me by their own intrinsic worth and evidence, cannot bind the conscience or rule the reason, in the same way or with the same authority as those taught and sent directly by revelation of God. The least of them that are spoken by the word of the Lord demands a submission of the understanding and the heart which the greatest discoveries of human science have no right to claim. It is not that the one may be true and the other not. It is not that the one may be more certain than the other. They may be both true and both certain alike. But the authority of God is in revelation in a sense in which it is not in nature; and the former is lawfully entitled to demand submission as a duty done to God, and to resent disbelief and disobedience as a sin against Him, in a way in which the latter cannot. The truth that a stone unsupported falls to the ground under the operation of the law of gravitation, however certain in itself, and however much the result of the appointment of God, has in it no binding obligation upon my rational and moral nature, in the sense that to despise or reject it were to commit sin. The discoveries of nature and the teachings of men cannot claim the same jurisdiction over



faith and obedience as the supernatural teachings of God; and if there be any portion of Scripture, or any class of its doctrines, that are no more than the statements of a fellow-creature like ourselves, however true they may be, and however important, yet their unrevealed authority cannot clothe them with the authority of God, and make the faith and submission rendered to them to be divine. A Bible in any part not a revelation from God, would to that extent be a Bible destitute of His authority either to convince or to command.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In a notice of Archdeacon Lee's work on Inspiration, which appeared in the *North British Review* (August 1857), I ventured to enter a protest against his doctrine, that those portions of Scripture in which the facts or truths were previously known to the inspired penmen, constitute no part of divine revelation. In the later editions of his work, Dr Lee refers to my strictures, and remarks: 'The reasons which the Reviewer assigns in support of this criticism do not appear to me to possess any relevancy; he adduces no instance of a revelation by God of facts or truths already known to man; nor is it easy to see how either the usage of ordinary language or the analogy of the course of divine providence can render such a sense of the word revelation admissible.'

In so far as regards the relevancy of the reasons against Dr Lee's theory of an inspired, but not a revealed, Bible throughout, I am contented to let the reader judge for himself, after weighing the argument in the text.

As to the challenge to adduce instances of a revelation by God of facts or truths already known to man, it is not necessary to go beyond the truth of the existence of God Himself as an example in point. The existence of one God, and no more than one, is a truth spoken by God Himself upon the mount, and so falls under the case of a revelation properly so called, according to Dr Lee's definition. Yet this truth was one which, according to the statement of the apostle in the Epistle to the Romans, was clearly taught and known from the works of creation. Further, if Dr Lee will turn to page 147 of his book (3d edition, note), he will find from his own pen an enumeration of cases of the revelation of truths previously known to the sacred writers who recorded them,—such, for instance, as the revelation to Paul of the Lord's Supper by immediate communication from God, although a fact public and notorious to the Christian Church. 'No doubt Dr Lee tells us that these were 'exceptions to the usual course of the divine economy.' But giving no reason why these should be accounted exceptions, most people

The distinction that divides the Bible into what is revelation and what is not, according as the matters recorded are supernaturally or only naturally known to the writers, is one that has been advocated by some who yet assert that the Bible is all throughout inspired. The only right representation of Scripture, and the one that gives us a record infallibly true and divinely guarded from error, is made up of the two ideas of a supernatural communication given by God, and of that

will rather take them for examples of the usual course of revelation. Once more, I am willing to accept of the instance which Dr Lee adduces of what is a proper revelation from God, when in the immediate context he refers to the direct utterance by the Almighty to Job ('The Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind') as an instance of revelation. Let any one turn to the passage, and he will at once see that it is a case of some of the best known and most familiar facts in nature spoken by God to the patriarch, and applied to the purpose of teaching him the duty of acknowledgment of the divine power and submission to the divine sovereignty. Man's ignorance of when and how the foundations of the earth were laid, and of the laws which bind the depths in their place and determine their limits; his ignorance of the time when the wild goats of the rock bring forth, etc., etc., were facts perfectly familiar to Job before, and because familiar, were used to inculcate the lessons of his own weakness and ignorance, and God's power and wisdom. According to Dr Lee, they are proper examples of revelation; and yet they are examples of facts familiarly known, and only because known, available for the purposes of spiritual rebuke and profit. No doubt Dr Lee may allege that the facts were known before, but that the lessons taught by God to Job through the facts were unknown. But this explanation is equally available in the case of all the other passages of Scripture which he excludes from the category of revelation, because they record facts or truths previously known. There are probably no facts previously known to the sacred penmen recorded in Scripture, which are not recorded for the sake of their connection with spiritual lessons that needed to be taught for the first time or taught afresh.

In so far as regards the usage of the word *revelation* in Scripture, I need only to refer to what has been already said as to the Biblical meaning and application of the term.

The theory of a revelation not co-extensive with Scripture, but limited to a certain department of its truths, and to certain passages in the text, is a fatal defect in an otherwise valuable work, and introduces weakness and confusion into the whole of Archdeacon Lee's argument.

communication supernaturally inspired by God. The revelation and the inspiration are co-extensive, and belong alike and equally to every portion of the Bible ; and where the one or the other is either mutilated or wholly denied, we fail to reach the true idea of Scripture infallibility. But there are some who, limiting the notion of a revelation from God to what in Scripture was not known to the penmen from other sources, still maintain that all its contents, whether previously known or unknown, were alike recorded under the inspiration of the Spirit. According to such a theory, there is a large portion of the sacred volume, and an extensive and important class both of its facts and truths, written from the personal knowledge of the authors, and not a revelation, but yet written under the guidance of the Spirit, and therefore an inspiration. It is of moment to understand distinctly the effect which such a view has upon the authority we ought to ascribe to the statement of Scripture.

The historical portions both of the Old Testament and of the New, amounting to more than one-half of the volume, consist (with few exceptions) of facts or occurrences that were known, or could have been known, from natural sources. Even the doctrinal portions of Scripture are made up, to no inconsiderable extent, of truths of reason or of natural religion, which might have been known from reason and conscience in man. And in respect to both the historical facts and the doctrinal truths actually discovered or discoverable naturally, they are so mingled up with what must be admitted to be the supernaturally derived teaching of the Bible, and the two to such an extent mutually interpenetrate, that it is impossible for any one, however critical, to sever between them. If, then, so very large a portion of Scripture, as this theory asserts, be not a revelation from God, it is a question of no ordinary importance, to inquire what inspiration really effects for such passages in the way of securing them from error, and conferring on them the character of truth. In the narrative portions of these we have, according to this view, human history inspired ; in the doctrinal statements we have human opinions inspired.

But the question which still remains is this, In what sense or to what effect does inspiration, apart from revelation, prevent, in respect of these, the introduction and mixture of error, and guarantee their entire truthfulness?

It is plain that the answer to that question must be determined by the sense that is put on inspiration, as applicable to such portions of the Bible. If inspiration be nothing else (in so far as regards written, not oral inspiration) but the supernatural transference of the facts and truths as they are found in the mind of the writer, to the page of the record which he indites, so that the expression of them there in human language shall be unerringly the same as the conception in the mind, then a very slight consideration will be enough to convince us that inspiration alone, without revelation, cannot secure infallibility in respect either of the facts or truths. By means of inspiration all error may indeed be excluded in the human expression of what is recorded; the imperfect ability of man to put in writing, without inaccuracy or defect, the conceptions of fact or truth he may seek to impress upon the page, may be remedied by supernatural agency, so that the copy in the record may infallibly correspond with the original in the mind. But that original itself may be erroneous, and so the copy infallibly transmit the error to the written page.

The conception in the mind of the sacred penmen, both of facts and truths, may have been misconceived and inaccurate, so that the facts and truths, although recorded with infallible accuracy *as conceived*, may yet not answer to the reality. In such a case, the miracle of inspiration, without the additional and previous miracle of revelation, would secure only with supernatural certainty that the original apprehension in the mind of the writer of the facts and truths, being itself erroneous, would reproduce the error in the accurate statement of them embodied in the inspired language of the record. It is when the conception as well as the record of the conception is infallibly true, that we can expect to find infallible truth in the latter. This can be effected only by the help of super-

natural revelation in addition to supernatural inspiration,—the former securing through the instrumentality of a miraculous presentation of facts and truths to the mind of the prophet by God, that his original apprehension of them shall be perfectly free from error; the latter securing, through the instrumentality of a miraculous transference of them to the written page, that the record of them intended for others shall be equally free from imperfection. Without a revelation in the proper sense of the word, the first idea of them in the conception of the writer may be mingled with human and involuntary misapprehension; without an inspiration in the proper sense of the word, the copy in human speech of the idea would fail to re-exhibit with infallible accuracy the original.

It is quite possible, indeed, that by those who deny to many and extensive portions of Scripture the character of a revelation, while ascribing to all of it that of inspiration, another and more extensive sense may be put on the word inspiration. If it is held as having to do not only with the infallible transference of the conception of fact and truth in the prophet's mind to the written page, but also with the formation of these conceptions there; if it is held to include under it the infallible communication to the mind of the facts and truths themselves which are to be first apprehended, and secondly recorded in Scripture, then indeed it may singly, and apart from anything else, secure perfect truth in the record. But, in such a sense of the word, inspiration would include under it what properly belongs to revelation, and the two would be confounded or identified. If inspiration is to be regarded as divinely guaranteeing the truth and accuracy of the idea in the prophet's mind, as well as the record in his page, it must in reality be held as doing all that revelation, or the supernatural presentation of the idea to the mind by God, is understood to accomplish. In this case, the controversy between the advocates of such a theory and the friends of plenary revelation as well as inspiration would be a controversy about words, or a mere question of definition.



If the two things essential to an infallible Bible—namely, the perfect truth of the conception in the prophet's mind, so far as necessary for the recording of it, and the perfect truth of the copy of the conception in human language in the record—be both of them ranked under the head of inspiration alone, instead of that of revelation and inspiration combined, then the debate is hardly worth the trouble of the discussion. It can only be a question as to the right classification or definition of revelation and inspiration. But in many cases, it is to be feared that it is more. The theory that would deny to large portions and classes of truth in Scripture, the character of a revelation from God, while ascribing to them that of an inspiration, has been frequently advocated and recommended, because it is held to explain the existence of human error and imperfection in the sacred volume in consistency with the fact of its being in some sense inspired. The alleged fact that the Bible, in those passages where imperfection is supposed to exist, is not a revelation from God, is adduced as a satisfactory answer to the imputation. Such a use and application of the theory by many, too clearly show that the inspiration attributed to all the Scripture is not attributed to it in the sense that would include under it the idea of revelation too, and so guarantee the infallible truthfulness of its statements.

The difference between an inspired Bible, all of which is revealed also, and an inspired Bible, many passages in which are not revealed, may be readily brought out by a reference to the different classes of Scripture statements to which the distinction applies.

In the extensive and varied department of Scripture facts, of which the sacred authors were eye and ear witnesses, the difference between the opinion that holds them to have been a revelation from God, and the opinion that holds them to be not a revelation, is very great, and fraught with important consequences even when inspiration, in the ordinary meaning of it, is attributed to the record equally. What does inspiration effect in the case of facts not revealed by God, and de-

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pendent for their credibility on the eye or ear witness of the writers? Of course, we take for granted that they were honest and veracious in what they sought to write, and that, through the inspiration given to them, they recorded with infallible accuracy their beliefs. But beyond honesty and veracity, there is required sure and certain knowledge of the events that they narrate. Now, although there is not a large room for doubt or hesitation in the case of many kinds of facts, yet there is noticeable room in the case of some kinds; and absolute certainty or perfect moral evidence may exist only in the instance of facts that can be judged of by the senses, and are public and open to all men's senses. The whole theory of Strauss proceeds upon the idea that facts reported, and even facts witnessed by the eye, may be myths and not facts, and that we may have reason for disbelief in regard to them, even when recorded by perfectly trustworthy and veracious historians. The theory is palpably and at first sight false in regard to nine-tenths of the kind of facts recorded in the Gospel narratives to which he applies it. But we cannot say that it is inapplicable as a possible theory to all kinds of facts. The common distinction drawn between testimony to opinion and testimony to facts is true in itself, but hardly exhaustive of the question. Men may in certain cases be deceived by their own eyes and ears; and with perfect veracity on their part, they may, in their narration of certain kinds of facts, be the unconscious instruments of deceiving others.

The question still remains, What does inspiration accomplish in such cases in the way of giving a safeguard for absolute truth? If it merely guarantees that the narratives of Scripture are an infallibly accurate transcript of the knowledge and beliefs of the writers as to the events of which they were witnesses, it leaves room still for the inquiry as to whether these beliefs and knowledge were themselves true. It is hardly enough to allege, that the occurrences liable to unintentional and involuntary mistake on the part of eye and ear witnesses are very few in number, and unimportant

in their character. This is true. But still such events are to be found ; and what is perhaps of more consequence, they are so mixed up with others of a different kind, forming with them an organic whole, as to make it difficult or impossible to discriminate between them, and to proportion the uncertainty in the narrative between those facts or features in it about which there may be unintentional and involuntary mistake, and those other and greatly more considerable facts and features about which there may be none. Nothing but the assurance, that the facts in their true aspects and bearings were given to the writers by supernatural revelation, will in all cases give adequate, not to say infallible, assurance that they are absolutely true. Without revelation, in addition to inspiration, the utmost that can be said is this : that the narrative is an infallible transcript or copy of the beliefs and knowledge of the writers,—leaving it still an open question as to whether their beliefs and knowledge were true.

Take the case of the Transfiguration as an illustration of our meaning. The event is recorded by three of the evangelists who did not see it, and is not recorded by the only one of the evangelists who did. We cannot doubt, indeed, that the three narrators were informed of the circumstances, apart altogether from divine revelation, by the report of those who were eye-witnesses of them. But if we look to the peculiar character of that supernatural glory that was seen upon the mount,—to the solemn fear and strange wonder which suspended the powers of observation of the beholders, so that they were heavy with sleep, and bereft of their self-possession, and under the unwonted impressions of what they saw, knew not what they said,—who does not confess the difference between the facts if gathered up and interpreted by the eye-witnesses themselves, even when recording their impressions and beliefs with infallible accuracy, and the same facts when not dependent on their conception or misconception of them, but given by revelation of God with divine truth, and infallibly guarded against the possibility of human misapprehension ?

Or take the case of the Resurrection. Was there nothing in the appearance of the risen Saviour to make the fact of His resurrection, although appealing to the eye-witness of men, to be one in regard to which it was desirable, for the believer's faith, that he should have something more than the eye-witness of writers truthful in recording what they believed they had seen, and inspired to record their beliefs with unerring accuracy? Between the time of His death and His reappearing after His burial, the Saviour had undergone that miraculous process of resurrection after which, as a model, the change in the bodies of believers, described by the apostle in the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians, shall take place. And when the earthly body had put on the heavenly, did not the supernatural change, in the person of the Redeemer, about to pass into the skies, render it fit and becoming that He should be seen, not of all, but of chosen witnesses, and that those who saw Him should not familiarly handle and touch Him as before? Even those who had known Him best in other days now mistook His appearance in a way that no sudden surprise or unbelief of His resurrection will account for. To Mary in the garden He looked as if He had been the gardener. In the upper chamber at Jerusalem the disciples, when He stood in the midst of them, supposed they had seen a spirit. At the sea of Tiberias the apostles knew not that it was Jesus. On the mountain in Galilee, where the disciples were appointed to meet with Him, and were warned beforehand of His coming, it is said that they worshipped Him, but it is also said that some doubted. Whatever is the explanation of the difficulty which, on various occasions, the disciples found in identifying and recognising the risen Saviour, it is of no consequence to the argument. Whether our Lord actually assumed at times other forms than His own, or whether, as is more probable, the change that had taken place in His now resurrection body rendered His appearances supernatural, here is plainly a fact witnessed by the senses, and yet in its features and circumstances so different from the ordinary facts which the eye measures and apprehends, that

we need, for the rest of faith, something more than the eye can give of evidence and assurance. Nothing but the facts, as seen in their proper realities and meaning by the eye of God, and given as such to His servants by revelation, can supply this.<sup>1</sup>

But there is another large and varied department of Scripture statements that illustrates the very same conclusion. In many of the narrative portions of the Bible, both in the Old Testament and New, the facts may not have been taught to the writers as eye or ear witnesses, but may have been familiar to them from other sources, such as oral tradition or previous historical documents. In such instances, if there was no revelation, and nothing tantamount to revelation, the mere fact that the Scripture revelation is inspired, according to the ordinary sense of the word, affords no guarantee for the infallible accuracy of the Scripture statements.

Take for illustration the case of that remarkable historical

<sup>1</sup> Archdeacon Lee, in his work on the Inspiration of Holy Scriptures (3d edition, p. 414), has specially referred to Joshua's miracle of the sun standing still, as perhaps the most striking illustration of the distinction between revelation and inspiration. He believes that the Scripture narrative of the miracle forms no part of divine revelation, although as a narrative it is inspired; and upon the ground of this distinction he seeks to answer the objection so often urged against the possibility and credibility of the miracle. The history of it is inspired; or in other words, it is an infallibly true account of Joshua's belief of what he saw. But the history forms no part of a revelation by God, and the miracle did not happen as Joshua believed that it did. 'The miracle is recorded as human sense discerned it.' But the human eye saw only the appearance of the sun standing still, while in point of fact it did not; so that while the record of the miracle corresponds truly with the appearance seen by Joshua, it does not correspond truly with the actual reality of the onward course and undisturbed movement of nature. So far as I have been able to understand his not very clear statement, this is the explanation which Archdeacon Lee gives of Joshua's miracle, and the method by which he seeks to answer the usual objections brought against it.

The explanation, however, is liable to insurmountable objections. First, it seeks to explain the one miracle of the sun standing still, by substituting for it another miracle, of a supernatural appearance of it doing so when it did not; for no natural appearance can be conceived as present-



monument, the book of the generations of the sons of Noah recorded in Genesis, or the case of the still more important document of the book of the generations of Jesus Christ recorded in the evangelical narratives of Matthew and Luke. According to the theory of those who deny the character of revelation to Scripture facts when known from other sources, these genealogies are no more than human history inspired; and as they now appear in the page of the sacred volume, are to be accounted a copy from earlier records, the copy being made by inspiration. It is obvious that here once more the question is raised of what effect inspiration, in the absence of revelation, is in reference to such histories. If inspiration is not confounded with revelation,—if it includes in it nothing more than the idea, that the writers, in quoting from pre-existent monuments, were unerringly guided in recording what these declare,—still, though the record may be infallibly correct as a record, we have no assurance, beyond the belief

ing to the eye what, according to Dr Lee's statement, Joshua saw and recorded. Secondly, this alleged miracle is just as difficult to explain and as hard to believe as the real one; for all supernatural acts must be equally possible or impossible to God. Thirdly, the occurrence of such a supernatural appearance, contrary to the reality, could have the effect only of deceiving the eye-witnesses of it, and did in point of fact lead Joshua, under an unconscious mistake, to record as true what was not. Fourthly, the principle implied in Dr Lee's explanation of Joshua's miracle would apply equally to any other fact which the Scripture writers as eye-witnesses have recorded,—as, for instance, to the fact of the resurrection of Christ; it being open to any man, upon similar grounds of interpretation, to say that this last-mentioned fact was a miraculous appearance of a resurrection, but not a real one, and the history of it an unintentional and honest mistake of persons deceived by the appearance.

But the point that ought to be especially noted in Dr Lee's view of the passage is the great difference between the theory of a Bible all inspired by God, but not all revealed, and a Bible both inspired and revealed throughout its whole contents. Joshua's miracle is brought forward as an illustrative case by Archdeacon Lee. And taking his interpretation of it, we are taught that while inspiration secures (as in the case of Joshua) that what the inspired man records is true according to his belief of the facts, it may not, unless the facts have been revealed as well as the history of them inspired, secure that they shall be true according to the reality.

of the writers, that those monuments from which the record is compiled were themselves true. If, on the other hand, inspiration is understood to extend beyond this, and to furnish a guarantee that the facts taken from the pre-existent sources are free from error and infallibly certain, then under the name of inspiration is illicitly assumed all that we contend for in revelation,—namely, such a communication given from God to the prophet as shall be an assurance, better than his own belief, that the things which he records are each and all of them true. In the instance of both the genealogies referred to, the sacred penmen plainly make them their own, by the manner in which they are incorporated with their narratives. But beyond their own belief of the credibility of the traditions or histories from which they are alleged to be drawn, we have no security at all for the facts recorded, if these were not given by revelation of God, and if we have nothing in the shape of guarantee for their truth beyond the certainty which inspiration in the ordinary sense of the word furnishes, that such traditions or histories have been infallibly transferred from their original source, whatever that might be, to the page of Scripture. In that extensive field of Bible facts held to be inspired but not revealed, because known from previous sources, such as tradition or profane history, inspiration without revelation affords no infallible warrant for belief.

Precisely the same thing may be said of that large and important class of truths found in Scripture, and previously known through reason and conscience, which must be accounted, according to this theory, to be inspired, but not revealed. The fact of the existence of a God, and of our own relation, as well as that of all things, to Him, as created by His hand, are expressly mentioned by the apostle as truths known by nature before revelation. The further fact of our own responsibilities to Him as His moral and intelligent creatures, —responsibilities reaching beyond life, and stretching far with their issues into eternity,—is a truth also implied and taken for granted throughout the whole of Scripture as pre-

viously well known. Other truths of natural religion are assumed as familiar in the statements of the sacred volume. Are these, then, to be excluded from the category of revelation, and to be regarded in no other light than as human opinions inspired,—opinions really held by the writers of Scripture, and transferred from their minds with infallible accuracy by means of inspiration to its page, but not really supernaturally communicated by God? It is plain, that with every human opinion, even when substantially true, there may mingle the imperfections of thought and conception incident to man; and in what respects and to what extent such imperfections do actually exist in the record of the conceptions of the Scripture authors on these matters, it is impossible for us to say, if these conceptions were not given by revelation of God, but, as they existed in their minds, were infallibly reproduced through inspiration in the written page.

It may be alleged, indeed, that no errors of conception or apprehension were permitted by God to be written down, but were supernaturally rectified before they were transferred to the permanent record. If this was the case, it is sufficient to satisfy the advocates of the plenary infallibility of Scripture. But this result could have been secured in no other way than by such a supernatural suggestion of the actual truth, and exclusion of the corresponding error, as are identical with a revelation, or equivalent to it. Inspiration, if it is to be taken in its ordinary sense, can effect only the infallible transference of the thought in the mind of the prophet to the outward page of a written Bible. It is a supernatural revelation alone that can purify the fountain within, and so rectify the original thought in the mind, and bring it into identity with the thought of God, as shall make sure that, when reproduced with unerring fidelity in the inspired record, it shall there be the infallible truth of God, and no other. The doctrines of natural religion, taught by reason and conscience, are the very foundations on which the religion of the Bible rests. But unless we have a republication of these in

Scripture by means of a supernatural revelation to the sacred writers, the inspiration that infallibly wrote down their beliefs and conceptions of natural religion, could not secure us against the error that may have mingled with them.

The distinction, then, so commonly taken in recent times between what was known and what was unknown to the sacred penmen among the truths which they recorded, and which denies to the one class the title of a revelation while ascribing it to the other, is one which enters very largely into the character of the record, and affects in a most important manner the deference due to it. The nature of revelation, in so far as that is known to us, either from the statements of Scripture or from its analogies to a communication from one man to another, forbid the idea of restricting the meaning and application of the word as such a theory restricts them; while all the evidence we have in favour of the Bible, as embodying a supernatural revelation from God, applies to all portions of it, and all classes of truths contained in it, and not to special or limited passages. The facts that were known to the Scripture penmen from the evidence of their own observation or the report of others,—the occurrences that were, or might be, discovered from natural sources, such as tradition or historical documents,—the doctrines that were familiar to them by means of reason or conscience,—were, equally with others, given by God,—in the sense that they were suggested or recalled to the mind of the prophet by an act of divine power, in such a shape as to be God's truth and not man's.

In refusing to restrict our definition of revelation to the case of unknown truths alone, we are only following the latitude of use which we find that Scripture itself gives to the word, and are not guilty of giving it an artificial or unusual sense. By revelation of known truths, we of course do not mean that, with respect to truths previously familiar to the prophet, he is, in the act of revelation, for the first time made acquainted with them in any sense. But there is a most important sense in which, however familiar with them before as truths of observation or history, or reason or conscience,

the sacred penman did *not* know them. He did not know them in the shape in which they are known to God,—nor in their connection with His scheme of grace,—nor as truths which He purposed to make constituent parts of His revelation to the world. Neither in their own reality and essential nature as seen by the mind of God, nor in their relations to the other truths to be combined with them in the record of Scripture, were they known to the writer who recorded them, however much acquainted with them in other respects. And when, not according to man's interpretation and understanding of them, but according to God's, they were actually presented to the prophet's mind in connection with other truths unknown and undiscoverable by him, they constituted, in no improper or unusual sense of the word, a supernatural revelation or communication of truth by the Spirit, even although it had been partially known after the flesh before.

The question, however, is not one about the meaning or application of words. It is a question about the fact of an infallible Bible. These two things we are justified, as we believe, by Scripture in asserting to be essential to such a fact,—namely, first, a supernatural suggestion or communication of truth to the prophet as it is known by God, and not as it is known by man, and whether it be in any sense known to him or not; and secondly, a supernatural transference of that truth, through the instrumentality of the prophet, to the written page, without addition or mixture of human error. The first of these two things is as necessary to the result as the second. Without revelation in the proper meaning of the word, there could be no infallible Bible.

But if the beliefs of those who drew their knowledge from history or tradition, or the beliefs even of those who drew their knowledge from the stores of their own observation or the teaching of their own reason and conscience, be insufficient for a believer's faith to rest upon, without, in addition, an actual revelation from God, what, it may be asked, is the ground of assurance that the prophets themselves had, that they did receive a supernatural communication from God



of the facts and truths they have recorded? Have we any greater measure of security that they were not deceived as to the fact of a revelation from God being given to them, than we have as to their not being deceived in regard to events which they saw, and as eye-witnesses narrated? In regard to peculiar kinds of facts, it is admitted that the faith of a Christian man craves for an assurance over and above what an eye-witness can give. Is the evidence that the Scripture writers enjoyed of the circumstance that a revelation was vouchsafed to them from on high, really equal to the evidence they possessed as to some sensible fact seen by their own eyes?

In dealing with such a question in connection with the controversy as to inspiration, it must be remarked, that the fact of a revelation being contained in one shape or other in the Bible is a fact admitted on both sides of the discussion, and therefore not waiting to be proved. Whatever opinion may be held as to the kind of evidence given to the man who received a revelation to satisfy him that it was no optical or mental deception, but that the vision and communication actually came from God, we have not to argue the question with those who admit that such a revelation has been vouchsafed, and who differ with us only as to the inspiration of the record.

Apart from this, the proper answer to the question, so far as we are necessitated or enabled to deal with it, may be found connected with these two considerations:—

First, Whatever evidence was granted to the prophet by God of the reality of that mysterious and supernatural transaction which took place between them when the word of the Lord came to him, was in the case of facts known to him as an eye-witness before, in addition to the testimony of his own observation, and not identified with it or superseding it. The fact, for example, of the resurrection, and of our Lord being alive after His death, was one known to John by the witness of his own eyesight, but it was also a fact known to him by the express declaration of God, announced by revelation.

The two testimonies are not identical; nor did the latter supersede or impair the former. Whatever was the strength of the evidence that John received to convince him that the revelation was an actual communication made to him from God, is additional to the evidence of his own eyesight, which he enjoyed in favour of the resurrection. The divine testimony did not neutralize the human, but came in support of it; just in the same manner as, among ourselves, and in common life, the testimony of a second party to the same fact does not supersede or neutralize, but comes in support of, his own previous observation in the case of the man whose eyes have seen it.

Secondly, It is the same God who reveals Himself through the instrumentality of His word to the prophet's mind, and that manifests Himself through visible things to the outward eye; and ultimately the belief in the reality of the revelation, and the belief in the reality of the sensible object, must be resolved into one of those fundamental laws of our nature which He has impressed upon it, and of which there is no explanation beyond His appointment. What is the evidence that any of the Scripture historians, eye-witnesses of the facts which they chronicle, possessed of the reality of them; or what is the evidence that any man possesses of the reality of the objects presented by God to the observation of his outward senses? There is none, excepting the fact that the object seen needs no evidence to secure belief in its existence. It is its own witness. Our faith in the independent existence of the thing we see is an ultimate law of belief, which cannot be explained, and is irresistible; and which, if it could be explained, would not be irresistible. If any natural explanation were possible as to the manner or the process by which God makes us to believe the facts of perception, they would not be instinctive beliefs or ultimate principles of our constitution, and so might be resisted.

In like manner, we cannot tell the steps of that process by which God spake to His servants by revelation, and how they were made to believe in the reality of the supernatural

communication. We cannot explain how the almighty power was engaged in controlling the understanding of the prophet, and yet not superseding the freedom of its opinions and convictions; or in what way the hand of the Lord made him to believe, without forcing and destroying his belief. The vision of God was poured upon the eye, and the Spirit of God moved in his heart, in a manner supernatural and mysterious. But in the communication of God to the intelligent soul, as much or more than to the perceiving eye, He can awaken instinctive and irresistible beliefs, according to principles of our constitution fundamental and essential to it, and giving security and assurance as great as any beliefs that are parts of our rational or sensitive nature.

We cannot, without denying ourselves, deny or refuse to believe that the commonest object that paints itself on the retina of the eye is a reality external to and independent of ourselves, and that the impression upon the mind truly corresponds with the outward reality. This is a foundation of certainty which man cannot believe to be false, without denying the trustworthiness of his own faculties, and achieving the impossibility of believing that he cannot believe. So it is with that revelation of God given to the prophet: it may be apart from the eye, and directly to the thinking spirit. His revelations of truth to the soul to whom He speaks the supernatural word, must carry with them an assurance as true and infallible as the perception of colour to the eye; and an assurance which, in so far as regards the process or steps by which it is produced in the mind, can as little be explained, because it is fundamental and irresistible. When the Most High reveals Himself to the inward eye, shall it be a revelation less certain than when He manifests Himself to the outward? or when He speaks to the listening soul, shall the word be less sure than when He enables a fellow-creature to speak to the ear? A revelation from God of facts and truths, whether known or unknown to the prophet before, must come to him with a validity which needs no evidence, and can receive none, beyond itself; a validity which, even in the

case of facts seen by the eye of the prophet, will lend to them additional and infallible confirmation.

Apart altogether from artificial and gratuitous distinctions, which would appropriate it to certain classes of truths and facts to the exclusion of others, we seem warranted in laying down the proposition, that revelation is the presentation of objective truth to a man in a supernatural manner by God.

## CHAPTER V.

### STATE OF THE QUESTION—INSPIRATION.

WE have spoken hitherto of no more than one of the two conspiring elements—essentially distinct, yet harmoniously combining to the result—which go to make up the ancient and orthodox idea of an infallible Bible. We have spoken of no more than of that objective truth which once dwelt, as truth, in the mind of God, and which He has miraculously presented to the mind of the prophet in its divine integrity and purity,—thus forming a proper revelation in the strict sense of the word. But beyond this we have not yet formally gone, not having dealt directly with the question of the character of the record in which the revelation is contained. To adopt a phraseology which has become current in the lips of many holding imperfect theories of revelation or inspiration, we have spoken hitherto of the word of God as contained in the Bible; we have not spoken of the Bible as being itself the word of God. We have not yet considered the question of the nature and measure of authority which may be conferred on the sacred volume, by the fact that it not only contains a supernatural communication from God, but that the record of it is supernaturally inspired. But if a man is prepared to go even this length, and to accept of the Scripture volume as embodying a proper revelation from God, even although the record of it should be no more than a human record, accredited by nothing but the historical veracity of its uninspired authors, very much will be gained in the way of clearing the ground for the acceptance of inspiration too.

A great proportion of the difficulties, and these the most



formidable, charged against the doctrine of plenary inspiration are not peculiar to it, but common to every theory which admits the Bible to be the record of a divine and supernatural message from God, even although it be a purely human writing, fraught with all the defects of authentic and credible profane authorship. Upon the lowest view of inspiration that can be taken while retaining the name, or even denying both the name and the thing as respects Scripture, while conceding the historical veracity of the writers, the admission that it contains a true human exhibition of a divine revelation goes very far in the direction of inspiration too. The supernatural element, both as a possibility and a reality, is there whether the Bible be inspired or not ; and it is a mere question of the number of times, more or less, that this supernatural power of God has been exerted, whether, added to the many miracles which we admit to be truly chronicled in the sacred record, we shall or shall not admit the one miracle more of inspiration as belonging to itself.

All the difficulties of the supernatural, whether as regards the wonders of power wrought, or the possibility of proving them, have already been accepted in the human yet veracious narrative of the supernatural which we have accepted ; and it is nothing but a question of the comparative facility and completeness with which we can explain a miracle of power as contrasted with a miracle of inspiration, if we shall be satisfied to believe the one while we stumble at the belief of the other. Most, though not all, of the apparent inconsistencies, and these not the least important, which have been charged against the Bible, militate as strongly against it on the supposition that it is uninspired but historically true, as on the supposition that it is an infallible record ; for if they belong to the substance of the history, it comes to be a mere debate whether we shall accept as divine a revelation which has in it the appearance of contradictions, because we believe that they are no more than apparent, while we reject a divine and inspired record, with the same appearance of contradictions, on the belief that they are real.

Almost all the mysteries in doctrinal and moral statements which seem to run counter to reason or conscience, and which have been urged as insurmountable objections to the Scripture, are as strongly objections against it, whether it be inspired or human, as a writing, for they belong far more to the essence of the revelation than of the inspiration; and the question of Bible infallibility is nothing but a question of whether mysteries, unexplained and inexplicable, which are consistent with the truth of the one, shall yet be counted inconsistent with the truth of the other.

The alleged difficulties, especially in the early histories and text of the sacred volume, which have tempted critics to have recourse to a mythical origin and explanation of them, are difficulties either inherent in the supernatural revelation contained in it, or to be charged against the writings if possessed of historical veracity; and to the man who in the proper sense accepts of both, the argument only comes to this, whether difficulties perfectly consistent with a divine revelation and with human veracity are yet perfectly inconsistent with the doctrine of a plenary inspiration.

Once more, the objections so strongly urged against an infallible inspiration in Scripture, as inconsistent with the rational and moral nature of man, and as overbearing both reason and conscience with an external authority, like some Papal tyranny fatal to their freedom, are objections that really strike not against inspiration, but against a revelation of truth and duty from God; and with the many who accept of the existence of such a revelation, the controversy is narrowed to the simple point of whether that standard of belief and practice which men have actually received in a revelation, shall be presented to us in a form more or less pure and perfect, in consequence of the revelation being inspired or not inspired. The vast majority of the most important of the objections urged against inspiration are really not peculiar to it at all; and the man who, in the proper sense and extent of the word, recognises in the Bible a supernatural revelation from God, although contained only in a

veracious human record, has already mastered the main difficulties which stand in the way of his admission of inspiration.

The immemorial and universal doctrine of the Church of Christ accepts the Bible in a higher sense than simply as a perfectly authentic and credible human record of a proper communication from God. There is the second element of *inspiration*, which meets with the first element of *revelation*, and conspires with it in mysterious yet harmonious combination to give the character of infallibility to the sacred volume. That narrow yet real vein of imperfection running through and intermingling with every written composition of mere man, even when best informed of what he writes, and perfectly honest to write it truly, within which involuntary and unconscious error is found, has no place in the Scripture text, and is effectually excluded by that supernatural inspiration of the Spirit which filled the penmen with power not their own when they composed its pages. In assuming the divine perfection of the Scripture text, in its ancient and original form, we do not, of course, deny the introduction into it, in subsequent ages, of errors due to time and the blunders of transcribers. When the supernatural guardianship that watched over the birth of the original text was not continued or renewed on every occasion when the manuscript was copied, we have no reason to expect that the imperfections, incident to it with other writings in the course of transmission from former times, were to be excluded. But apart from these, which belong to a separate head of theological discussion, the doctrine of the catholic Church has ever recognised in the written text, as it came from the pens of its authors, and viewed as distinct from the revelation contained in it, the same purity that belongs to its source, and an infallibility free from addition or admixture of human error.

The power which secured such a result was not found in the authors themselves. Even after their souls were enlarged and strengthened to receive the words of divine wisdom given them in the revelation by God, they needed to be endowed with other gifts than belonged to them by nature, before they

could be qualified to be the authoritative teachers of that revelation to others, or the unerring penmen to record it for ever for the sake of mankind.

Let us shut out as impossible whatever errors or defects belonged to them in consequence of imperfect information as to the truths or facts to be recorded; for these were shut out by reason of the supernatural communication, which fully and divinely taught them what was to be committed to writing. Let us also shut out as impossible whatever corruptions or alterations might have arisen from a dishonest reluctance to record aright what they were taught; for their perfect veracity as men and writers would, in the absence of any divine control, have effectually excluded these. But their own native and involuntary defects of memory and judgment and power of expression still remained with them as men, and honest men, privileged to hold communion with Uncreated Wisdom, and called upon to record its thoughts; out of which errors, however far within the limits of perfect historical veracity, must have resulted in any record that they made. Above all, however insignificant these errors may have been, contrasted with the amount of truth translated into the page of Scripture, still the word written by their unaided pens was their own expression of the divine idea, not God's expression of it; and the difference between the two is unspeakably great. The divine idea, as it dwelt in the mind of God at first, had to pass through the medium of the conception and expression of the prophet before it could reach the page on which it was permanently written; and unless guarded by supernatural care, and kept by a supernatural power, must have taken the mould and complexion of the imperfect medium through which it passed in the transmission. Without supernatural inspiration, in addition to supernatural revelation, we might have had in the sacred record the honest and authentic expression by man of his belief and understanding of what God's revelation contained, but not the divine mind itself reproduced in the divine page, and the supernatural idea reappearing

in the supernatural image in which God Himself had recorded it. The errors of memory, judgment, and expression of the human instrument, transferred along with the divine idea into the human page, may have been very great, and yet all of them unconscious and involuntary; mixing together, to an indefinite and unknown extent, the infallible revelation with the fallible expression of it.

To what an extent the one of these differs from the other, may in some measure be understood from the analogous case of a communication made from one man to another. In how very few instances, even where there is the fullest and most intimate communion of one man with another among ourselves, through the medium of human language, is the native and true conception dwelling in the one mind transmitted unimpaired, by the expression of it on the one side, and by the apprehension of it on the other; or received and reflected back so completely on the part of the person to whom it is conveyed, that it could be said to be absolutely the same conception in both? The imperfections of language, in man's use of it, to express, and the difficulty of a second mind to apprehend, the idea presented by the first, interpose in all cases a barrier to a perfect understanding. And if we may reason analogically on such a subject, are we not much more warranted to say, that without supernatural intervention, the powers of judgment, memory, and expression on the part of man would be insufficient to reproduce in human speech the thoughts of the infinite mind; and the record of revelation could never have been so the image of the divine truth, as to be rightly called the word of God?

The unaided penman, however honest and anxious in seeking that, through his imperfect conception and expression of it, the revelation of eternal truth should reappear exactly the same as it was given to him, would be unequal to the task; and his hand could never have so transferred the thought of the Revealer to the written record, as that the idea in the divine mind and in the human writing should have been one and the same thing. If there be any right



meaning in the assertion, that when perusing the page of the Bible we are holding communication with God's mind and not man's, and are dealing with His truth, and not with the truth of a fellow-creature, there must be something more in the page than a merely human and fallible record of a divine revelation honestly written down, according to the best recollection of it that the writer could command, and the fullest expression of it which his unaided powers could furnish,—imperfect as that recollection left to itself must have been, and still more imperfect as must have been his unguided expression of it. The natural and involuntary errors of memory and speech must have been removed by help from on high : his mind and tongue must both have been touched with fire from the altar ; and in power of recollection and expression, he must have been miraculously sustained and moved by the Holy Ghost.

Along then with, and over and above, a supernatural presentation of truth to the mind of the prophet by God, there must have been, in the case of an infallible Scripture, a supernatural inspiration from God, enabling the prophet unerringly and without failure to transfer the revelation given him, and in the purity and integrity in which it was given him, to the permanent page ; so that thus it might be, in so far as the capacity of human language will allow of it, an adequate reproduction and image of the divine mind.

In dealing with the question of that supernatural power which presided over the production of the sacred record, and secured the result, we feel the want of those analogies between things divine and human, which in some measure helped us to understand the nature of a revelation from God. There is nothing among men resembling what in Scripture is described as inspiration. Nothing but the fact and the result of the fact are given in connection with it ; and in respect of neither is there anything answering to it in ordinary life. Scripture assures us of the fact, that certain men selected by God to receive a revelation, and to declare it to others orally or by writing, were, in doing so, acted upon by

the Spirit of God, in order to qualify them to fulfil their commission. The nature of this action in itself, and in its influences upon the minds of the holy men who experienced it, is nowhere described or explained in the sacred volume. It was invisible and secret. It was confined to those divinely chosen to convey to their fellows the message of God. It was unknown to others who enjoyed the gracious and enlightening influences of the same Spirit. It was not given at all times even to those who experienced it; or for any purpose except to endow them with superhuman power to convey the communication of God to others. It was an action which, being supernatural, was not understood in its nature or the method of its operation even by those who were the subjects of its power, and still less by those who never enjoyed it. Beyond the mysterious reality of such a power in the case of the commissioned man who received and declared the revelation, there is nothing further told except as to its results.

Both in the case of revelations embodied in the oral teaching of the first teachers of the faith, and also in the case of revelations embodied in the permanent record of the canonical books, we have the distinct testimony of Scripture that they are to be looked upon as characterized by infallible truth and divine authority. The positive assertions of the Bible as to its own statements; the submission and belief claimed for the writings and words of the men who, whether in Old Testament times or in New, declared or recorded the communications of God; and the actual deference paid to them as divinely true, and binding on the faith and obedience of all,—clearly prove that the visible result of this invisible action of the Spirit on the men whom He quickened and moved, was to clothe all that they said or wrote when under its influence with infallible truth and divine authority. This was the open and acknowledged result of the secret action that went on within the minds of men to whom the Holy Ghost had been given, that they might speak and write in God's name. Between these two things,—the gift of the inspiring power to act within them, and the issue of its action

in the infallible words that they spoke or wrote,—nothing whatever is told in Scripture, and nothing whatever is known. All that is intermediate is unexplained, and probably inexplicable. We have the act, and the result of the act; but nothing more. All that is announced is the fact that certain men were filled with the Holy Ghost; and then the result of the fact, that they spake or wrote as the Spirit gave them utterance.

The one case among men that has been considered by some Christian apologists as answering to the facts of inspiration, and affording an explanation in some measure of the nature of it, is when one man dictates his thoughts or sentences to another, who commits to writing what is thus dictated. But the analogy between the two cases is far from being an accurate one, and in some respects indeed is fitted to mislead. The process of dictation by which one man communicates his thoughts or words to an amanuensis, is analogous to the case of divine revelation, not of divine inspiration; it is only one method or form of making a communication from one to another. The act of committing to writing what is thus dictated, although it resembles in some respects the result of inspiration in the case of inspired men, is very far from presenting an accurate or complete resemblance. The secretary or amanuensis who writes at the dictation of another, is not under any controlling influence exerted over his will, should he be indisposed to transcribe the thoughts and words given to him; nor over his understanding and memory and powers of expression, should he, without being unwilling, fail, as he undoubtedly would fail, to transcribe them correctly.

In both these respects the alleged analogy between human dictation and divine inspiration is completely at fault. Under the action of the Spirit of God in His extraordinary inspiration, the penmen of Scripture were under an irresistible control to write as He moved them, and were endowed with superhuman power to do so, without the failure or imperfection incident to them as men. If, in the case of dictation by one man to another, such an exemption from error were

possible, it could only be, if that were conceivable, by making the amanuensis a mere machine in the hands of his employer, —a passive instrument to record what was dictated, without the active intervention of will, or intelligence, or consciousness on his part. The infallible guidance of the Spirit, although irresistible, was not mechanical, but perfectly compatible with the free exercise of conscious personality. In these respects it is impossible to find among men any corresponding case at all analogous, or that will serve to explain by its resemblance the nature of inspiration.

The guarded silence of Scripture in regard to the nature of inspiration, and the mode of its working, even were there no other reason for it, is sufficiently accounted for by the fact that it is purely supernatural. No explanation based on natural laws, or suggested by natural analogies, can apply to the supernatural. We read of the operation of the Spirit on prophets and apostles and righteous men; and we read of their words and writings being, in consequence of that operation, divinely true and authoritative. But how this took place we are not told, and it is needless to inquire. Under the power of God, acting in a manner to which there is no resembling parallel in human experience, there was first the supernatural revelation given, and next the revelation supernaturally inspired in the oral or written word in which it was embodied. These two things were alike mysterious, because equally miraculous. The revelation was not always accompanied by the inspiration, but the inspiration was always accompanied by the revelation. They are distinct in their nature, and the revelation is sometimes, in point of fact, given without the inspiration; but generally they are found in combination, and spoken of in Scripture under the same general form of words. In these circumstances, we must limit our definition of inspiration within the bounds which such Scripture descriptions suggest. To go beyond these is consistent neither with the sobriety of the true philosopher, nor with the humility of the devout interpreter of the Bible.

We have these two ideas presented to us in the Scripture

accounts of inspiration, and nothing more : first, the objective truth that had been revealed and was to be declared orally or in writing ; and second, the supernatural transference of that truth, without error or omission, to the spoken or recorded word. Under what kind of action of the Spirit this result was accomplished,—what was the condition of the inspired man under the operation of the supernatural influence,—in what way the divine power and the human freedom were combined without being confounded in the act ;—these are points that have not been revealed, and with respect to which it is useless and unlawful to speculate ; for it is a mystery which we neither comprehend, nor are capable of comprehending. The above two elements are all that can legitimately enter into our notion of Scripture inspiration. As an act, inspiration is the supernatural operation of the Spirit of God upon a man, by which he is enabled to speak or write with infallible accuracy the objective truth revealed to him by God for that purpose. Or, as the result of that act, inspiration is a statement, in speech or writing, made with infallible accuracy, through the supernatural operation of the Spirit, of objective truth revealed to man by God to be so stated. Anything more than this, included in the definition, would involve what is not essential to inspiration, and is in itself purely hypothetical. Anything less than this would not come up to the Scripture statements on the subject.

There are various points in such a definition of inspiration which it is important to note, both for the purpose of testing the accuracy of the definition, and in order the better to understand the nature of inspiration itself as contrasted with recent theories on the subject.

I. *First* of all, it is strictly supernatural ; and because it is so, it cannot be accounted for on any natural principle, or by any intelligible theory, whether mechanical or dynamical, objective or subjective, orthodox or neologian. It is rigorously to be distinguished from every operation or influence of the Spirit of God short of that one which, itself supernatural, has im-



pressed its own supernatural character upon the written word, which it has not only revealed, but inspired.

The Scripture accounts of inspiration, indeed, invariably lead us to connect its results as seen in the infallible record with their source in the Spirit of God, who dwells and moves and operates in various forms in all life. Every variety of language employed points to the same divine origin. The cause of inspiration in the prophet, or in the prophet's words, is spoken of generically as 'the Spirit of the Lord.' The condition of the inspired man when under inspiration is described in general terms as being 'in the Spirit.' Even when the Holy Ghost is not specially mentioned in connection with it, the language is varied only in the way of using terms which identify His power with the cause of it,—as when it is said by the inspired man, 'The word of the Lord' came upon me; or, 'The hand of the Lord' was upon me; or, 'The Lord spake' unto me. The most cursory examination of the passages in which inspiration is described, will sufficiently satisfy any inquirer as to the fact that we are to seek for its source and cause in one or other of the various kinds of influences which the one but universal Spirit of God exerts throughout the universe.

In the omnipresence and omnipotence of the glorious and undivided Godhead we see the foundation laid for the Scripture doctrine, that God is everywhere and universally operating by His presence. In the distinction between the three Persons of the Godhead themselves, and in the corresponding distinction between their offices and works, in reference to man, and especially to redemption, we see the foundation laid also for the Scripture duty of recognising, in the one presence and power of all, a difference as to their working; so that we are taught to distinguish between what is done by one, and what is done by another, of the Three. In the same manner there is one presence of the Holy Ghost throughout the universe, dwelling and moving and acting in all being; but there is a difference in regard to His presence and His power, marked out by the special manner and form in which they are to be

recognised in the results : it is the same presence, but variously manifested ; it is the same power, but its effects are not the same. There are different revelations of the one presence of the Spirit in all, and there are different acts of the one power moving in all. The very same Scriptures that lead us to believe that it is the undivided Spirit that is present throughout all life, and actuating all being, instruct us also to search out and to acknowledge His different manifestations, varying in their seen results. We can confess at once the unity and the diversity of the Spirit of God ; and are not forced to believe that the one Spirit is divided, or that His many works are the same. It is an error of a serious kind, to argue that, because of the manifold diversity of the operations, there are diverse and separate Spirits ; it is hardly a more pardonable error, to conclude that, because of the oneness of the Spirit of God, His influence and works are one.<sup>1</sup>

The power and influences of the Holy Ghost, and the various ways in which He makes Himself to be known, are entirely a doctrine of revelation, and must be accepted as it is revealed. There is ground in Scripture to assert that the universal life which lives throughout the works of God, from the highest created intelligence to the lowest of His moral and rational offspring, in all their grades and varieties, have the centre of their being in that one uncreated Spirit that moves and upholds and animates them all. There is ground in Scripture to believe that not the humblest form of sensitive existence but exists in Him ; and that even the dead and unconscious matter which knows no rational or sensitive life, has its form and order and support from His sustaining presence. It was the Spirit of God that moved on the face of the waters at the creation, and brought order out of confusion, and life out of unconscious dust ; and it is the Spirit that still moves on the face of the earth, and upholds and orders the laws of its material framework. It is the Spirit of God that animates even the irrational creatures, sustaining and actuating them in their

<sup>1</sup> Hannah : The Relation of the Divine and Human Elements in Holy Scripture. Bampton Lecture, 1863, p. 13.

peculiar existence and degree. It is the Spirit of God that breathed into man in the beginning the breath of a distinct and higher life, and whose inspiration still giveth him understanding and sustains him in its various exercises. It is the Spirit of God that lives in the life of the Christian man, under laws which make his new being to be altogether dissimilar from his old, and unspeakably superior. And if we knew the nature and gifts of life in higher creatures, we should be forced to recognise in them too the presence and power of the One Spirit of God, embracing and pervading, fashioning and quickening all.

And yet it would be a fallacy, both unreasonable and unscriptural, to confound in one the various works of the same Spirit, and among the many natures and gifts of life which He has originated, to assert one common identity. Among the various degrees of life He has bestowed and supports throughout the universe of God, there are diversities which cannot be confounded without running counter both to the teaching of experience and the statements of Scripture; and between all of these natures and His own there is a fundamental distinction, which cannot, without lapsing into pantheism, be denied. Separating the various influences He exerts, and the works that He performs, there are lines drawn deep that cannot be overlooked without identifying natures and things different and even opposite. They may all be connected in some way, because due to the same source; they may be classified into one series of divine acts, because the results of the power of the one Spirit of God; there may be a common link which binds into one fellowship the highest and lowest natures in the scale of being, and the most ordinary and the most strictly supernatural events in the wide diversity of His operations, because the same Divine Person is the source and cause of all. But to pretend to break down the actual separations erected between them, and to overleap the differences of kind that divide them asunder, is simply impossible, without denying the reality of all distinctions in nature, or making them no more than verbal or apparent. To

identify the different operations of the Spirit of God because they are all of them His operations, or to confound His ordinary with His supernatural works because they are both of them His works, would be to set at defiance both the testimony of Scripture and the teaching of experience. The fact that they are alike due to the same Divine Agent, is no ground at all for alleging that the common or gracious operations of the Spirit are not to be distinguished from His influences in inspiration.

The universal presence and action of the Spirit of God in all men and in all events is, then, a doctrine of Scripture not to be denied, but asserted; but the special presence and action of the Spirit of God in holy men of old, and in the works of power or writings of inspiration which came from their hands, is no less a doctrine of Scripture which cannot be fairly questioned. The one of these is not incompatible with the other; and those who acknowledge the common presence and working of the Divine Person in the department of nature or providence, are not to be charged with inconsistency because they assert a very different kind of presence and working in the department of miracle and inspiration. The denial or overlooking of the distinction between the two has been one frequent source of those mutilated and imperfect theories of inspiration which cut down the meaning of the word to something that is not inspiration at all.

It is admitted, indeed, that because the common and the extraordinary influences of the Divine Agent are to be traced to the same superhuman source, and are often spoken of in Scripture language indiscriminately as works of the Spirit, the necessity of proving the distinction between the two must fall upon the advocates of a supernatural inspiration. They must be prepared, by proper and sufficient evidence, to show that the work of the Spirit in the department of nature is no more than ordinary, while His work in the department of inspiration is extraordinary or supernatural. Without a distinct and satisfactory proof that they are to be distinguished from each other, as being the first of them common and the

second miraculous, the presumption undoubtedly would be, that, because spoken of equally as works of the Spirit, they were the same in kind or nature. But such a proof the friends of a supernatural inspiration believe that they are in circumstances to offer. They believe that while, with respect to the one class of events, it is admitted by all parties that they are non-supernatural or ordinary, it can be demonstrated, with respect to the other class, that they are strictly supernatural or miraculous. Inspiration, like every other miracle, is known not by its cause, but by its results; it is seen in the effects which it has accomplished in connection with the sacred volume; it is witnessed in the features, divine and superhuman, which it has impressed upon its words; it is proved by the character of infallibility which it has conferred on the Scripture page. If it can be proved that infallible words were spoken at certain times by fallible men, or that an infallible book was written by human pens, we have evidence of the presence of a miracle in the same manner, and to be tried by the same rules of evidence, as when we read of the words of human lips raising the dead to life, or the acts of human hands opening the eyes of the blind. It is plain that no natural power on the part of the sacred penman, however much quickened or sustained by the ordinary influences of the Spirit of God, will account for or explain the inspiration of Scripture, unless you get rid of these two things in the record, namely, infallible truth and divine authority.

These are the two features which have been impressed upon the page of Scripture by inspiration, and are plainly and undeniably supernatural. If we can bring evidence to prove the existence of these two remarkable characters in the Bible, then we have proved that it is distinguished from other results of the Spirit's influence, by being miraculous, while the latter are not. They are seen to exist in no other book; they attach to the writings or utterances of no other authors; they belong to the words of none except the penmen of Scripture. Is it a miracle, or is it not, that there should dwell



in the words of these fallible men, infallible truth and divine authority ; so that other men, as wise as they, must be silent when they speak, and both believe and obey when they command, or else have their unbelief and obedience counted for sin ? If this be a fact, and capable of proof as a reality, then there needs no other argument to prove that the work of the Spirit in them was not ordinary, but extraordinary, and that the result was not common, but supernatural. The distinction between the influences of the Divine Agent in the understanding and hearts of ordinary men, and His influences in them, is at once established.

We are not at this moment arguing the point of evidence. The occasion for doing so will occur afterwards. We are not seeking to adduce the proof sufficient to show that the Scriptures have this supernatural character impressed upon them in consequence of their inspiration. Our aim at present is rather to contribute to a right adjustment of the question in debate, and to indicate the ground on which the issue between the friends and opponents of plenary inspiration must be tried. It is a truth not to be denied or under-estimated in its practical importance, that the life and understanding, the moral and rational nature of all men, and the spiritual being of the Christian man, are sustained in their exercises, and actuated and pervaded, by the one all-present and all-powerful Spirit of God. The common life of man is ennobled by being joined unto the Spirit, and the person of the Christian is consecrated by being made the dwelling-place and temple of His presence. But, because due to the same Divine Agent, the work of the Spirit in the natural actions of men, or even in the gracious exercises of the Christian life, is not the same as His work in the inspiration of prophets and apostles. This latter, as proved by its results in an infallible Bible, is, in the only proper meaning of the word, supernatural. The words of no other but the inspired man can claim our belief so as to make us responsible in the same manner for the faith we give or refuse ; the commands of no other have a right to claim submission

in such wise as to render us sinners if we refuse to render it ; the teaching of none other, however wise or good, can be a standard of truth and falsehood, of right and wrong, to us ; the doctrine of no other is a law to bind and loose the understanding and the conscience. If the Bible be what it claims to be, an infallible and divinely authoritative guide or rule for time and eternity, it cannot be so through the ordinary influences of the Spirit, common to all men alike, or even common to all Christian men. Whether the Bible be or be not thus endowed in all that it says with infallibility and divine authority, is a question of fact that must be determined by the kind and amount of evidence appropriate to the proof of such a fact. But if it be, it is the result of a miracle, and of nothing else.

The distinction drawn by the advocates of plenary inspiration between the work or influence of the Spirit of God in inspiration and in other departments of His operations, is not one invented to suit the exigencies of the argument, but has long been accepted by theologians as necessary and true. The distinction is justified by Scripture and by experience.

There is a threefold province in which the Spirit of God is seen to pursue His operations and to manifest His power ; and each of them is separated by lines of demarcation from the other, not to be obliterated. The works of the Spirit in these three departments are as distinct as the departments themselves, and cannot, without an abuse of language, be spoken of as the same, or identified, without overleaping distinctions laid deep and sure in the nature of the things. There is the department of nature, in which the Spirit of God, by His ordinary operations, animates the life, and actuates the movements, and orders the actions of all men, and indeed of all His creatures. There is the department of grace, in which, in the case not of all men, but of all Christians, the Spirit of God, by His gracious operations, quickens the spiritual life, and renews the nature and illuminates the religious insight of God's children. And there is the department of the supernatural, in which, in the case not of all

men, nor even of all Christian men, but of chosen prophets and evangelists selected to receive an extraordinary revelation from God, and to be the messengers of it to others, the Spirit of God endows them with ability to work miracles of power to attest it, and miracles of inspiration to record it, for the benefit of their fellows.

Each of these three provinces in which the Spirit presides and operates has its own works of divine power to show, appropriate to itself, and distinct from those of the others. It were to contradict both the witness of experience and the declarations of Scripture to deny the distinction, and to identify them as if the same. Neither the object to be attained nor the result actually manifested, is the same in any two of the three departments. In the province of nature, it is not the object of the Spirit of God to bestow His gracious or spiritual gifts; and, accordingly, neither in the case of His creatures universally, nor in the case of all men, does He work for that end; He exercises His influences on men in general, not to make them infallible, or even to make them Christian, but to support them in being, and to animate and order their common actions. In the province of grace, it is not the object of the Spirit of God to endow even all Christian men with the supernatural gifts of miracle or inspiration; it is His object to renew their natures and to save their souls. But in the province of His supernatural operations, it is His object to bestow, on those whom He has chosen, the endowment of infallible truth, not for their own sakes, but that they may minister, as His instruments, to the faith and obedience of those through all time whom He desires to put in possession of His word.

The seen result is different in all the three cases, and appropriate in each to the object in view. In the case of all the creatures of God, and of men generally, there is no manifestation of infallibility; they are found only to live and move and have their being in the Spirit that actuates them all alike. In the case of Christian men there is no infallibility and no exemption from error beyond the promise that they shall not fall

for ever or fatally from the truth ; they are seen only to live a new life of faith and obedience in the Spirit. It is in the single case of those who have been commissioned to receive the message of God, and to transmit it to others, that they are found to be divinely guarded from failure, and infallibly led into truth, in all that they speak or write in the name of God. It would be an error to say, that in the ordinary or gracious departments of the Spirit's working, the men whom He actuates and moves are infallible men. It would be no less an error to say, that in the supernatural department of His power, the men whom He actuates and moves are not. The only matter of importance is to ascertain when they belong to the one class, and when to the other ; and this is a question of fact that must be determined by the evidence appropriate to such facts.

It is not possible to distinguish between the various ways in which the one Spirit moves and works, except by distinguishing between what we know of the objects or the results of His influence in the different parties experiencing it. The results are all alike, in being the gifts of the Spirit, whether they be the endowments of natural life in all, or the communication of the spiritual life in Christians, or the signs of an apostle in miracles and inspiration. They are all alike in finding their cause and source in that Spirit, the unity of whose nature is yet compatible with the diversity of His operations. And it is only by what we are informed in Scripture of the object and result of His influences, that we can tell whether they belong to the province of the natural or the supernatural, and what is the proper character of the power that He exerts in them who experience it.

It is said of Bezaleel and Aholiab as distinctly as of Moses, the servant of God, that the Lord filled them with His Spirit. It is only what is explained of the object and result of the mysterious and divine gift, that enables us to understand that, in the case of the former, it was to endow them with a power not their own to devise curious works, to work in gold, and in silver, and in brass ; while, in the case

of the latter, it was to enable him to write in a book the law of God which he heard from His lips. We are told of Samson that the Spirit of the Lord moved him at sundry times in the camp of Dan, not less than of the holy men of God that they were moved by the Holy Ghost ; and it is not until we gather the design and witness the effect of the ministry of the One Spirit in each, that we understand that He clothed the one with supernatural strength to war, and the other with infallible truth to speak, for God. The unseen Spirit that dwelt in them all was seen in the various forms and diversities of the effects wrought, whether these were natural, or gracious, or miraculous ; one in the source from which they emanated, but separate, and sometimes strangely opposite, in their own character.

We cannot pretend to understand the nature of the divine Worker, or the mystery of His working, whether He moves in the paths of His ordinary providence, or is seen in His goings within the sanctuary, or acts in the majesty of miracle and inspiration. In the field of nature, of grace, and of the supernatural, it is equally true that we cannot tell whence He cometh or whither He goeth, except by the accomplished and registered results of His power ; but these seen and proved, enable us to say to what order His working belongs. In the silence of nature, and life in its familiar and noiseless course, we recognise the Spirit of God in His ordinary operations ; in the still small voice within the heart of the converted and renewed man, we know the Spirit in His works of grace ; in the signs of miracle and inspiration we confess the Spirit in His supernatural might. There are diversities of operations, but the same Spirit.

It need not trouble us if it shall be objected, that we cannot define or set forth in express terms the distinctions between the province of the natural and that of the supernatural, in connection with the Spirit's work, except by pointing to the results witnessed in each case. There is a difficulty, perhaps there is an impossibility, in formally defining the difference between the supernatural and the gra-



cious, and between each of these and the common power of the Spirit, from a consideration of its own nature, or from anything else than what we are told in Scripture as to its object, or witness in experience as to its effects. There is a difficulty in the definition, because we are dealing with the supernatural. The multitude of definitions that have been offered of a miracle,—and hardly any of them, perhaps, completely adequate or satisfactory,—demonstrates the difficulty.<sup>1</sup> But, after all, it is only a theoretical and not a practical one. So long as we can with ease and certainty practically distinguish between the supernatural and the natural by their observed results, we need not disturb ourselves one whit because we find it hard to define what a miracle is by considerations drawn from its own nature, or to give it a logical habitation and name in the world of abstract speculation.

There is no reason to be discontented with the ancient doctrine of the Church, that the operations of the Spirit of God are to be separated into the supernatural in the department of miracle and inspiration,—of the special or extraordinary in the department of grace,—and of the common or ordinary in the department of nature. We can vindicate such a classification upon grounds of Scripture and reason brought to bear on the known effects of the Spirit's working in each of these provinces; even though we may not be able, to our own satisfaction, to frame such a definition of the supernatural in itself as would logically discriminate between it and the powers working in grace or nature. If we did fail in our definition, we should ascribe the failure to the very nature of the thing to be defined, which cannot be understood or explained on natural principles, and not to the absence of any real distinction between it and the non-supernatural, or to any difficulty in recognising and establishing that distinction by their seen and opposite effects. Looking to their known and acknowledged results, we can easily say this is of

<sup>1</sup> See a statement of the various definitions given of a miracle, in Dr Lindsay Alexander's 'Christ and Christianity,' p. 303.

nature, this other of grace, and this third result belongs to the supernatural.

These ancient distinctions, deep and well laid in the truth of the things, which theologians of every shade have recognised, are not to be done away by a play upon words, or a shifting of terms, because it may happen that things that differ are spoken of under the same language employed in different senses. The inspiration of the Almighty that gives man understanding, is not to be confounded with the inspiration of Paul in the third heavens, when he spake of visions and revelations of the Lord; just because man's understanding in its ordinary exercises is erring and fallible, whereas the words of Paul were 'the commandments of the Lord.' The description given by Butler of a miracle, in his chapter on 'The supposed Presumption against Miracles,' is very much to the point.<sup>1</sup> With the cautious wisdom which so eminently characterizes him, he does not attempt to give any logical definition of a miracle, but tells us, that in its very notion it is *relative to a course of nature*, and implies *somewhat different from it* as being so. Now we have a course of things in nature in which the Spirit of God, by His common and universal influences, upholds the life and animates the actions of all men and all creatures; and a miracle is somewhat different from this. We have again, and distinguished from the first, a second course of things in grace, in which the Spirit of God, by His special and extraordinary influences, upholds the spiritual life and animates the spiritual actions, not of all creatures, nor even of all men, but of a special class of men, even of Christians; and a miracle is also somewhat different from this. The negative description by Butler of a miracle, by a process of exhaustion approximating to the idea of its proper nature, is enough for our purpose, falling short although it does of a formal definition. There is a course of things in the wide department of the Spirit's influences in universal nature, and also in the narrower department of special grace; and inspiration is 'some-

<sup>1</sup> Analogy, Part II. Chap. ii.

what different' from either : it may not lawfully or philosophically be confounded with His agency in the reason or conscience of man, or in the spiritual life and light of the Christian.

If inspiration, then, in the Scripture sense of the word, when applied to the Bible or to its authors, is strictly supernatural, it requires only a slight reference to current opinions, to understand the extent to which they run counter to sound views on the subject.

The side from which the recent theology of Germany has regarded this question of inspiration, has been determined to a large extent by the influence of Schleiermacher and his school. Their stand-point has been exclusively a subjective one. With them, inspiration, in the person of prophets and apostles, is nothing but the result of the gracious and illuminating influences which maintain the Christian life of the Church of Christ in common, and are peculiar to no chosen few ; and the products of inspiration in the sacred page may exhibit a higher religious wisdom or a deeper spiritual feeling than the Christian authorship of other good men, but are not elevated above the risk or the reality of error by any influence different from that which now keeps the lips of a Christian from falsehood, and his writings from destroying heresy. Whatever improvements or modifications in the views of their master, tending towards a stricter orthodoxy, have been favoured by Neander, Nitzsch, Tholuck, and others, they have left untouched the fundamental principle of the theory which admits of the introduction of human imperfection into the sacred text, to an unknown and indefinite extent. The liberty which Strauss, upon his theory of inspiration, hardly more anti-supernatural than theirs, finds himself justified in taking with the Gospel narratives, may appear to Neander and Tholuck to be excessive and destructive, and his criticism to be undeserving of the name ; and yet, if their doctrines as to the divine element in Scripture are duly considered, it will be found that they differ from his not in principle, but only in degree ; and that this difference is manifested in respect to

the occurrence of errors in the sacred page, only by an acknowledgment respectively of the more or the fewer.

It was impossible to imagine that the discussion of this question among ourselves could remain uninfected by such views. Coleridge was indebted to Germany for what was peculiar in his opinions on inspiration, and adopted the theory which evacuates it of all that is truly supernatural; with some unimportant modification in the extent of its application to the sacred text, but with no modification at all as regards its principle. The not inconsiderable school, both of professed theologians and of speculative and philosophical inquirers, that has arisen under the influence of Coleridge's thinking, have inherited and given currency to the same system in all essential respects.

In Dr Arnold, Archdeacon Hare, and others belonging to the same class, we have the advocates of an inspiration due to that common grace of God's quickening and enlightening Spirit shared by all Christians in their measure. Mr Morell, whose philosophy of religion is closely moulded upon the German school, is the zealous and able defender of the same opinions. Retaining the name of inspiration, he denies the reality of it in the sense of a supernatural endowment, qualifying and enabling a man to record with infallible accuracy the revelation that has been given to him by God. 'Instead,' says he, 'of maintaining a strained verbal theory of inspiration, which fails of the very purpose for which it was constructed, how much more consistent is it to look upon *the word* as the natural and spontaneous expression of that divine life which the inspired apostle received immediately from God!' 'Inspiration, we repeat, depends upon the manner, form, and accuracy of a man's religious intuitions. When these are of that extraordinary character which appeared in the men who lived with Christ on the earth, and received a double portion of His Spirit as apostles and martyrs for the truth, *then* we see the unquestionable evidence of a real inspiration; and the writings emanating from such men, when acknowledged by the universal Church, become essentially canonical, as being valid exhi-

bitions of apostolical Christianity in its spirit and in its power.' 'Let there be a due purification of the moral nature, a perfect harmony of the spiritual being with the mind of God, a removal of all inward disturbances from the heart, and what is to prevent or disturb the immediate intuition of divine things? And what do we require in inspiration more than this, or what can more certainly assure us of its heavenly origin?'<sup>1</sup>

It is no wonder that Mr Maurice, with his profound admiration of Coleridge, and the strong subjective tendencies of his own views, should be found a faithful witness for the same doctrine; and that the powerful mystical element in his mind, so nearly akin to Quakerism, which makes him averse to dogmatic truth, and has led to his theological tenets being held by him almost in a state of solution, should propel him toward the theory of an inward light rather than an objective revelation as the source of the inspired word. In his chapter on Inspiration, forming one of his 'Theological Essays,' he tells us that we 'must forego the demand which we make on the conscience of the young, when we compel them to say that they regard the inspiration of the Bible as generically unlike that which God bestows on His children in this day ;'<sup>2</sup> and he strongly repudiates and condemns 'the course which our modern evangelical school, renouncing the maxims of their forefathers, were inclined to recommend,—the course of setting up the Bible as a book which encloses all that may lawfully be called inspiration,' on the ground, as he argues, that the doing so amounts to a virtual denial that the same Spirit which inspired the Scriptures, dwells in any sense by His gracious influences in the hearts of all God's children.

But perhaps these views have been most distinctly and with least reserve developed, and, as it appears to us, most consistently applied, in the work of Mr Macnaught on the 'Doctrine of Inspiration.' The author is a disciple of Mr Maurice, to whom liberal acknowledgments are made for the

<sup>1</sup> Philosophy of Religion, pp. 158, 176, 186.

<sup>2</sup> Maurice : Theological Essays, pp. 335-345.



profit contributed by his discussion of inspiration. Following out the discussion, Mr Macnaught proceeds to develop his own views in the same direction. After a full inquiry into the proper meaning of the term inspiration as it is employed throughout Scripture, he sums up the results thus :—‘ This which we have written seems to be the Bible’s own teaching on the subject of inspiration, namely, that everything good in any book, person, or thing is inspired ; and that the value of any inspired book must be decided by the extent of its inspiration, and the importance of the truths which it well (or inspiredly) teaches. Milton and Shakespeare and Bacon, and Canticles and the Apocalypse, and the Sermon on the Mount and the eighth chapter to the Romans, are, in our estimation, all inspired ; but which of them is the most valuable inspired document, or whether the Bible, as a whole, is not incomparably more precious than any other book,—these are questions that must be decided by examining the observable character and tendency of each book, and the beneficial effect that history may show that each has produced.’ ‘ Thus, after a careful examination of the Scriptures, and after noticing the usage of Christendom, we conclude that, although there has for many centuries existed a false and superstitious opinion in favour of inspirational infallibility, yet there is still recognised and admitted the ancient scriptural and only true idea of inspiration, according to which the term signifies, *that action of the Divine Spirit by which, apart from any idea of infallibility, all that is good in man, beast, or matter is originated and sustained.*’<sup>1</sup>

In accordance with a definition so unexpected and comprehensive, Mr Macnaught, in the course of his work, does not fail to supply novel and pertinent illustrations of a divine inspiration residing in and exhibited by creatures, whether rational or irrational, by animal and vegetable life, by matter organic or inorganic ; and he at least has no difficulty in finding not only books, but inspired ‘ books, in the running brooks, sermons in stones, and good in everything.’ There is a true

<sup>1</sup> Macnaught : *Doctrine of Inspiration*, pp. 192, 196.

*inspiration* in 'the instinct of the owl;' it is heard in the rushing of 'the wind;' it is seen in 'the springing of a blade of grass;' it murmurs among 'the streams that flow among the hills;' the 'hinds of the field calve' by inspiration. And because there is no evidence of *infallibility* attaching to these acts or phenomena, Mr Macnaught argues that there is no such thing as infallibility attaching to the writings of inspired prophets and evangelists. Hence a considerable portion of his work is occupied with an attempt to show that, to a large extent, the Bible ought not to be believed.

Such conclusions as these, extreme though they may appear to some, are nothing but the consistent and legitimate development of a theory which breaks down the distinction between the supernatural and the natural agency of the Spirit, and makes His works in inspiration and in providence to be identical. It is a mistake which lies at the root of most of the fallacies and misapprehensions in this controversy about inspiration, to confound or identify the supernatural influence of the Holy Ghost with either His special influence in grace, or His ordinary influence in nature, and to think that the effects or results are alike. Mr Maurice has done the first of these, when he holds that the effects of the Spirit in grace are the same with those in inspiration; and that as the one does not imply the infallibility of the Christian man, so the other does not imply the infallibility of the inspired man. Mr Macnaught has done no more than carry out the principle of identifying the operations of the Spirit in the various departments of His power one step farther, and a step fairly and legitimately involved in the principle. He has identified the agency of the Spirit in the supernatural department of His active power, with the agency of the same Spirit in nature and providence; and employing the same line of argument as is adopted both by his German and English predecessors, he maintains that their effects are alike, and that the inspiration of an owl or a blade of grass is the same as that of apostles and apostolic men.

The distinction between miracle and no miracle once broken

down, there is no sufficient reason why any one should stop in his application of the theory within the territory of His gracious, and refuse to apply it within the sphere of His natural, operations. Why say that the gracious influences of the Spirit in the heart of the Christian man are identical with His supernatural influences in the inspired man; and not, upon the same principle and with as good reason, say that the natural agency of the Spirit in sustaining the life of the lowest living thing upon the earth, is the same with the inspiration of Isaiah or Paul? If we would successfully rid our feet from the snare of such a fallacy,—if we would save the doctrine of inspiration from the inroad of a principle which, in its legitimate applications, would rob it of all value,—if we would rescue the Bible itself from that ‘higher criticism’ which finds or fancies an error in every page, and yet has no standard by which to determine what in the Bible is the word of God and what not, we must draw between the supernatural and natural operations of the Spirit of God a line so deep and broad, that, to borrow the language of one who was no Bibliolater, ‘the pretended overleaping of it would constitute imposture or betray insanity.’<sup>1</sup>

In seeking, then, to adjust aright the state of the question, as between the friends and opponents of a plenary inspiration, it is necessary to understand on both sides that the inspiration in question is supernatural, and not merely gracious or natural. The proper point in debate is simply this, whether or not we have in Scripture evidence to prove that the Spirit of God, by His miraculous power, did qualify and guide erring man to record His revelation without error.

In dealing with the question as thus stated, we must not be misled by the circumstance of the occasional use of the term *inspiration* in a secondary and inferior sense, in popular or devotional theology, as equivalent to the possession of natural genius, or the gracious illumination of the Spirit vouchsafed to Christian men. Once, indeed, in our translation of the Bible, the word is used to express the agency of

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge : Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit, p. 94.

the Spirit in bestowing natural reason, with which man has been gifted by his Creator,—as where it is said the inspiration of the Almighty has given us understanding. And the popular language both of literature and theology has, in a loose and figurative sense, applied to men of genius, or of eminently Christian attainment, the word which, if taken in its strict sense, would rank them with the goodly company of the prophets and apostles. But it is plain that the question, properly put, is not whether the word may, in a figurative and inferior sense, be so employed, but rather whether it is not employed in its primary and supernatural sense when the Bible speaks of itself as being inspired. Especially, as the decisive proof of the usage and meaning of the word in Scripture when applied to its own text, the question is whether the results of inspiration, as these are described and seen in the sacred page, be not, in the proper sense of the term, miraculous, because clothing the words of men with the infallibility and authority of God

As little is there anything to influence us in an objection which has frequently been urged against a plenary inspiration, and has furnished materials, more than enough, for popular appeal. The orthodox doctrine of a supernatural element in the Bible has been represented as a barrier between it and the feelings and wants and sympathies of ordinary men. It has been spoken of as if the inspiration claimed for evangelists and apostles was of a kind to interpose a gulf of separation between them and humanity,—so that they could not have in their own hearts, or express in their writings, a fellowship of thought and feeling with others; and as if the Bible that they penned under the power of the supernatural Spirit was the product of a different Spirit from that which is refreshing and comforting the sinner at the present hour.

Such a view is founded upon a misstatement of the question in debate. The advocates of plenary inspiration no doubt assert that there are diversities of gifts given to inspired and to uninspired men,—so different, that the one class are miraculous, and the other are not; but they assert also

that there is but one Spirit in both, and that His supernatural influences, to whatever men they are given, did not unmake them as men, nor destroy their feelings as Christians. The supernatural qualifications, whatever these might be, which it was necessary for them to possess in order that they might without error record the revelation granted to them, were given in addition to, and not to the abatement or undoing of, any one feeling or sympathy which belonged to them as sinners exercised by the same temptations, touched by the same sorrows, saved by the same faith, versant in the same religious experience, rejoicing in the same hopes as other believers; and that, possessed of the same human nature, whether in sin or in salvation, as others, and animated by the same Spirit which in His gracious influences animates all the children of God, there was nothing in their gifts of prophecy or inspiration to forbid them to meet with all, and sympathize with all, as brethren. The disciples of a plenary and not a partial inspiration may or may not be able to prove the position which they strenuously assert, that the infallible divine power which inspired the men was not inconsistent with the integrity and freedom of their will and feeling and intelligence, and whole nature as men. But in laying down, as a preliminary to the discussion, the proper *status questionis*, they are entitled, on the promise of future proof, to assume in the meantime that the two are consistent. Nothing but a mistaken apprehension of the position taken up by the defenders of plenary inspiration, could have given occasion in any quarter to such an objection.

In thus making a distinction, not in degree but in kind, between the writings of God and the writings of man, we are not depreciating the doctrine of the inward illumination of the Spirit as dwelling in the hearts of believers, and which must co-exist with the light from without, in order that it may shine unto the perfect day. But we cannot consent to accept of the inward teaching as a substitute for the outward, just because the grace within that is sufficient to save his own soul is not the grace sufficient to enable an erring man to



proclaim without error the gospel that is to be for salvation to others, and to clothe the words that he speaks or writes with absolute authority and divine truth. There is no security against error, even to himself, in that inward illumination given to a Christian man to enable him savingly to understand the truth, beyond this, that to whatever extent he may err in his apprehension or belief of divine things, he shall not err permanently, or so far as finally to fall away. Still less is there a security against error to others, when from his own inward light, kindled it may be at the fire that came from on high, he proceeds to tell them of divine truth, and to write it down for their instruction ; such inward light being, in its operation and effects, altogether distinct from that supernatural power which rested on prophet and apostle, when they spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

And which of the two theories is it,—the one that declares the Bible to be wholly written by inspiration of the Spirit, or the theory that declares it to be no more than the writings of man,—that best exhibits the necessity and magnifies the power of that inward teaching of the Spirit, and that subjective quickening and illumination of the soul, required before a man can be taught savingly and to profit?

On the side of the Spirit of God : let us proclaim the Bible to be no more than a common book, inspired by the thoughts and feelings of men like ourselves ; and the truths which it declares, to be nothing better than the product of their own discovery or experience, or the beliefs their religious sentiments taught, but taught erringly and imperfectly, in the school of nature or of grace ;—and what reason or necessity is there that the Spirit of the Holy One should be moved from the bosom of the Father to visit the soul with extraordinary influences from heaven, in order that it may apprehend and receive truths like these, not better than other human discoveries ? But let us declare the Bible to be the very inspiration of the Spirit and His own supernatural work, and the truths of the Bible to be both given by His revelation and recorded by His miraculous power, and we can, in part at

least, and truly, see a reason why the Holy One that dwells in the outward word should watch over His own inspiration, and, by His extraordinary work in the understanding and heart of the believer, seek to bring the soul within into fellowship with the divine word without. It is meet and right that the Spirit in the heart should meet with the Spirit in the word, and form a unity truly divine; and that, separated though the nature of humanity be by sin from God, it should yet, through the medium of the supernatural word, and by the agency of the supernatural Spirit, be brought again into oneness with Him. If that word which is revealed and recorded in the Bible be indeed filled with the Holy Ghost, none but He can, and it is meet that none but He should, by His indwelling within, and by His bringing the word and the soul into one, re-establish such a union.

On the side of man: let us proclaim the Bible to be the human record of human discoveries in divine things, the transcript in the sacred page of the religious life and feelings of men who in other days lived near to God, but were not supernaturally inspired by Him, and what reason is there to say that an extraordinary illumination from on high is needed by us to understand or believe them; or to deny that what men, left to themselves, have experienced and taught, other men may, without higher aid, learn and experience? But let us place the Bible, as to its teaching and words, in a position of superiority which no human discoveries have ever reached; let us ascribe to its doctrines not only a divine origin, but also a supernatural character, as both given and inspired by God, and then we can better see how the natural man understandeth not the things of the Spirit, and that, in order to their being understood, the same Divine Agent that developed them out of the depths of His own eternal wisdom, and shaped them, in human speech, into forms of eternal truth, must work His work of saving illumination on the soul. The thoughts of man, in order to be received, need no teaching beyond what man may enjoy at the hand of his fellow; the thoughts of God can only be learned by His own Spirit instructing the under-

standing and illuminating the nature. We can measure the greatness of that teaching within, and tell the height of that illumination in the soul, when we know that it is God's truth and not man's that is to be learned by the process. Because it is His own supernatural word, and not another's, that is to be searched out and interpreted and believed, there is needed an enlargement of the human understanding, and a quickening of the human spirit, and an inward light commensurate with the light from without, which none but the Holy Ghost, in His extraordinary influences, can bestow. It is the doctrine of a plenary and supernatural inspiration by God, in contradistinction to a partial or human inspiration, that places in its proper position the truth both of the necessity and of the peculiar character of the teaching of the Spirit in the soul.

And not only the doctrine in the theory of it, but also the doctrine in its practical influence upon the mind and conduct, is contrasted with its opposite. What are the spirit and attitude of the man who comes to the Bible believing that it is a human record, or at best partly of God and partly of man,—who sits down to sift and decide between the two, and to discover what, after being tested by his own critical methods or spiritual insight, he shall receive as true, and what reject as untrue,—as compared with the spirit and attitude of him who knows that the Bible is all, in every statement, the word of God, and feels that it is his duty to accept it upon God's testimony? Even were the result, as to the doctrines believed, in both cases the same,—even were it the very same confession of faith that was, in the end, honestly arrived at by both parties,—yet the practical effect would be altogether different. In the one case you see the spirit and attitude of a man who has searched amid errors, and laid hold on truth, and believes it, not because he has gotten it from God, but because he has found it out himself,—who receives the doctrines he most surely holds, not so much because they came from heaven direct, but because he lighted upon them through his own discernment,—and who sits in judgment upon the Bible, and believes its words, not because

they have been spoken by Jehovah, and not as an homage to Jehovah's veracity, but because they recommend themselves to his own feelings and convictions, and in acknowledgment of his own discovery of them as true. In the other case we have the feelings of a man whose soul is silent because he hears God speaking, and speaking to him,—who receives the doctrines of the Bible, not because he has discovered their truth for himself, but because it is the *word* of God,—whose faith in it is an homage, not to his own powers of judgment or discrimination in deciding between the truth and falsehood, but to the testimony and authority of the Most High,—and whose attitude is not that of one who sits in judgment upon the Bible, but of one rather who sits at the feet of Him who has inspired it. It is not difficult to say in which of these two are best made manifest the faith of the believer and the feelings of the child of God.

In like manner different, and even in some respects opposite, as are the feelings and spirit in which the truth is searched out in the two supposed cases of an infallible and a fallible inspiration, the effects of it when found and believed will be equally so. It may be the same truth, in so far as regards its substance and fundamental articles, which the two men have arrived at by such different routes. But in the one instance it is his *own* truth which he has discovered for himself, and which he holds fast because it is his discovery, but which embodies no divine certainty to satisfy the understanding, and no divine authority to lay under responsibility the conscience,—which has no title to be believed other than any truth which he himself has found out, and no right to submission higher than all truth may claim. In the other instance, it is not his truth, but the *truth of God* which he has received from above, and believes because he has so received it,—which he does not so much hold, as it holds him,—and which, because it is God's, given by His Spirit and resting on His testimony, has in it infallible certainty to be the warrant of his faith, and supreme authority to be the law commanding his obedience. In the two cases it may be the very same doctrine believed; but it

is believed on very different grounds and to very opposite effects. In the one instance it is faith in God; in the other instance it is faith in man.

The supernatural element in the Scripture idea of inspiration, is the fact that especially distinguishes it from imperfect theories; setting aside the latter as mutilated and inadequate, and leading, in its proper applications, to very different practical results.

II. But a *second* point to be especially noted in the scriptural account of inspiration, is the absence of all theory or explanation as to the mode of inspiration, while plainly asserting the existence of it in the inspired man. The silence of Scripture on this point is as expressive and authoritative as its articulate assertions; and the refusal to define the mode of the divine agency in the matter, amounts to a practical prohibition,—forbidding us to speculate, and still more to dogmatize, upon the divers steps of the process by which the result, plainly revealed, was brought about.

The supernatural character of inspiration is indeed a fact which, rightly understood, would have taught the same lesson, and prevented men theorizing upon the kinds or degrees of a power superhuman, and therefore not to be reduced to the level of any human analogies or explanations. The varied language of the Bible, when describing inspiration, is nothing but an instance of the necessity of speaking to man even of heavenly things in human speech, and setting forth supernatural realities under earthly figures. Not one of these figures of speech amounts to anything like an explanation of the miraculous process, and was never intended indeed to furnish any.

The images employed are borrowed from those occasions on which men derive their impressions, or declare their belief, of sensible or common things; the ordinary language that expresses the inlets of knowledge or the outlets of thought, is used in the descriptions of the revelation by which the prophet received, and the inspiration by which he gave out, the



truth communicated from above. Visions and dreams in which the divine presence was manifested, and oral or written language in which the Holy Ghost spake, represent all that we are told of the two processes by which the message of God was given and recorded. Such language is fitted to assure us in every possible way, and under various forms of representation, of the reality of the fact itself, but leaves us in as entire ignorance, as before, of anything beyond the supernatural result. The variety of figurative expression given to the two facts of revelation and inspiration, has tempted many to inquire into the form or mode in which they were effected, as if it were lawful or competent to enter into the secret place, where there was none but the prophet and the prophet's God, and to explain the miraculous agency through which, without undoing his nature as a man, he was made the instrument of conveying infallible truth to others. Such attempts have ended in nothing but disappointment; and in ingenious theories, which, instead of throwing light on a matter that must from its very nature be inexplicable, have had a powerful tendency to mislead us, not only as to the mode, but as to the actual results, of inspiration.

It is hardly possible to exempt from this censure any theory which goes beyond a simple statement of the effects of the divine influence as witnessed in an infallible and divine record,—whether the attempt has been directed to declare the mode of the superhuman agency, or the condition of the prophet, bodily or mental, under its operation. Anything more than the bare announcement, that men under inspiration spoke and wrote with infallible truth and divine authority, is a *theory*, because more than Scripture has told, and more probably than we can understand, on the subject. The theory may be true or may be false; but it is not less, in either case, unrevealed, and therefore unwarranted.

It is still more to be deprecated, when, in addition to its being unwarranted by Scripture, it really strikes against what Scripture has taught as to the results of inspiration in connection with the authority and truth of the inspired page, and

what, therefore, we can both understand and feel it a duty to accept. Perhaps, indeed, there is scarcely any extra-scriptural theory that does not err more or less in this latter respect, as well as in the former, by substituting some conclusion or dogma of our own in the place of the simple statement of the word of God, and so either adding to or taking from the scriptural idea of inspiration. It is hardly to be believed that any mere theory, whether objective or subjective, mechanical or dynamical, foreign or native, can represent aright and with adequate accuracy the process of God in His secret and supernatural dealing with His servant ; or fail, upon such a subject, to add the human conception of it to the divine, or perhaps to replace the one by the other. It is hardly possible, within the limits of that which is truly supernatural, to speak when God has been silent, without falling into error.

There have been theories of this kind, themselves unwarranted by any statement of Scripture, and chargeable with error, in the direction of leading to a denial or limitation of those human characters which, in addition to inspiration and in combination with it, distinguish the authors of Scripture. Whatever the peculiar facts of inspiration be, they must be consistent with that entire humanity which belonged to the Scripture writers as men, and the characteristic peculiarities that distinguished them as authors. And when, in the perilous attempt to explain what has been left unexplained, theories of inspiration were devised in the seventeenth century which spoke of the sacred authors as pens in the hand of the Spirit of God, they were chargeable with the double error of speculating where the Bible is silent, and of the speculation running counter to what is plainly witnessed there of the personal peculiarities and literary characteristics of the writers.

To what extent the originators or disciples of such theories were conscious or unconscious of the inconsistency, is not a matter that can be easily determined. Probably very few of them, if any, would have denied in express terms that inspired men, under inspiration, were still possessed of their

entire powers, and of the free exercise of them. They would, in all likelihood, have rejected without hesitation the Montanist doctrine of the suspension of the bodily and mental faculties of the prophet, when possessed by the divine and supernatural presence. In the case of some of those who illustrated the doctrine of inspiration by the analogy of mechanical similitudes, it was their anxiety to set forth the infallibility of the written word that caused them to overlook, without meaning to deny, the free agency of the writers; and led them to the use of language which, strictly interpreted, amounted to a virtual rejection of it. Perhaps in not a few instances, the worst of the mistake was the announcement of any theory at all, when the earnest and exclusive advocacy of any had so much the appearance, and also some at least of the effects, of error.

The theory of verbal inspiration, or the theory that human language was the medium through which the Holy Spirit both revealed truth to the prophet and empowered him to record it with infallible accuracy, is one that probably is not open to the objection of being inconsistent with the free exercise of the faculties of the writers according to their ordinary laws. It is hardly possible to interpret the statements of Scripture so as to avoid the conclusion that revelations from God were sometimes, though by no means always, given through means of articulate language spoken and heard in a way similar to that in which it is used in the ordinary intercourse of men. And although there is no such distinct ground in Scripture statements for the assertion, yet it is possible that words given by God were sometimes the means through which in inspiration He enabled the prophet with plenary fidelity to record the revelation communicated. To assert that the use by God of the instrumentality of words to enable the inspired men first to receive, and afterward to write, the divine message as they have done it, is inconsistent with the laws of the human mind, would be a proposition altogether presumptuous and incapable of proof. The divine origin both of man's faculties and of man's speech, and the divine

adaptation of the one to the other, make it impossible for any man who believes these, to assert that it is not in the power of God, in perfect harmony with the constitution and laws of the human mind, and in the exercise of His supernatural influence, to employ language as the medium to reveal, and to inspire the prophets whom He selected for the purpose of ministering, His message to their fellows. Our ignorance of the limits of supernatural power, and our experience in the case of other miracles of their adaptation to the system of nature, would, were there nothing else, forbid us to assert the inconsistency of inspiration by words with the freedom of the inspired men. The theory of verbal inspiration ought not to be counted,—it certainly cannot be proved to be,—inconsistent with the scriptural facts of the case.

Still it is a theory. Although instances can be pointed out in which it were difficult to deny, in consistency with any fair system of interpretation, that Scripture warrants the idea of verbal revelation, yet it would be equally difficult to prove that in all cases words were the medium of communication. In the matter of inspiration (not revelation), the proof that it was always carried on through the instrumentality of language is still less decisive. And with respect to both, it would be to limit the power of God in a manner both unwarranted and presumptuous, to imagine or assert that He cannot employ other instrumentality to effect the end in view.

The connection between human thought and human language is not of that invariable or essential kind to justify us in saying that there can be no avenue to the mind except through words, and no channel by which its ideas may be guided to the infallible expression of them except a verbal inspiration. The example of those persons to whom, from their birth, the power of speech has been denied, is sufficient to show that the reception and expression of thought are independent of the medium of language. But, above all, we are not justified, by anything taught in Scripture, to allege that verbal revelation and verbal inspiration are the only manner in which the Spirit of God operates in conveying His supernatural commu-

nications to the prophet, and in enabling him to transfer them with plenary truth to the Scripture record. It were a rash statement to hazard, that any one of a variety of forms of language might not have been employed by God with equal effect to convey His message to His servant; and that other words than those actually found in the written page might not have availed to put it on record with no less even of verbal fidelity. He is sufficient to work His work of inspiration through this particular medium, or through other instrumentality. It would be unwarranted by anything in Scripture, to deny that He can use such means; it would be equally unwarranted to affirm that He can use no other. Verbal inspiration, as the method of the divine agency, is a doctrine which, if it cannot be affirmed to be false, can as little be affirmed to be true. If it does not run counter to anything found in Scripture, it is, we suspect, an explanation of the mystery which Scripture does not demand.

But there are theories of inspiration of a different kind, and pointing in an opposite direction,—theories which go to limit the divine element in the sacred volume, and seriously to run counter to the Scripture facts as to its divine authority and infallibility. They err not only in the way of dealing with the supernatural mystery as if it were a thing the process of which could be explained and reduced to the laws of ordinary experience, but also in the way of substituting an imperfect and restricted form of inspiration for the true one.

It has been held and elaborately argued, that the supernatural agency of the Spirit of God operating upon the sacred penmen was of different kinds, appropriate to the different occasions on which it was employed; that the inspiration of the various parts of Scripture was not uniformly the same in degree; and that certain passages, or certain classes of truths, enjoyed a greater and others a less measure of the divine superintendence, according to their respective characters. The theory of an inspiration of different kinds and degrees has been held under a variety of forms and modifications. While admitting a sort of general supervision by the Spirit



over the whole, it has been maintained by some theorists, that portions of the Bible are no more than human compositions, and others divinely inspired ; while another class, who believe that all of it was written by superhuman agency, also believe that the agency was very different in degree, according to the different character of the subject-matter of inspiration. The fundamental idea of the theory is, that the human instrumentality employed, to a certain extent rendered unnecessary or superfluous the divine power, in proportion as the former was sufficient of itself to record in the written page the truths to be embodied there. In matters well known and familiar to the sacred penman, it is argued that divine power was unnecessary for the task to be performed ; while, in matters unknown or beyond his understanding, his own resources had to be supplemented by ability given from on high, according to a graduated scale measured by the greater or less difficulty experienced in the duty.

With many divines, such as Dr Hill, three different degrees of inspiration were believed to be sufficient to account for the facts of Scripture, and were found in its pages,—the inspiration of superintendence, of elevation, and of suggestion.<sup>1</sup> An investigation of the phenomena of Scripture induced others, such as Dr Henderson, to multiply the number of varieties to five,—the inspiration of excitement, of invigoration, of superintendence, of guidance, and of direct revelation.<sup>2</sup> But whatever the forms under which it is held, or the number and variety of classifications of the divine element believed to be exemplified in the Scripture text, the fundamental principle is the same. Where nature ended, there inspiration began.<sup>3</sup> When the unaided powers of the penmen were insufficient, a measure of divine help in the exact ratio of the insufficiency was furnished. In proportion as the human element was present and active, there the divine element was absent or passive. Inspiration was meted out in

<sup>1</sup> Hill : Lectures on Divinity.

<sup>2</sup> Henderson : Divine Inspiration, p. 312.

<sup>3</sup> Dick : Essay on Inspiration, p. 8.

the degree in which memory, or judgment, or expression on the part of the writer failed. The Spirit of God waited on the weakness of man, as the graduated supplement to it.

The origin and occasion of this theory cast no small measure of light upon the character of it. It was introduced avowedly for the purpose of meeting the allegations of error and imperfection in Scripture, and in order to reconcile the existence of real defects with the belief of a divine agency employed in the composition of it. And had there been any foundation of truth in the theory itself, it would have answered the purpose for which it was used. Wherever imperfection existed in Scripture, it was sufficient for the advocates of such a scheme to say that there the human element was present to the exclusion of the divine, and that the error was due to the former in the absence of the latter. The theory was undoubtedly based upon a compromise between the friends and the enemies of inspiration, in which the enemies were allowed to retain the errors which they alleged in the sacred volume, and the friends were enabled to account for them, while yet retaining the general doctrine of an inspiration, at least in name.

But the compromise was one fatal to the character of the theory itself. It allowed of the introduction of error into the infallible text, to an indefinite and unknown extent. Inspiration, measured out as a supplement to human ability in the sacred volume, leaves much of it with no impress of divine truth or authority beyond what is partial and insufficient. The very idea of degrees of divine inspiration carries with it the implication that there is something there which is not wholly God's, and something that is not altogether His infallible truth. To the extent that inspiration, according to such a theory, is given, the word is God's; to the extent to which it is withheld, the word is man's. In that joint result of inspiration and reason which we call the Bible, there will be a line to be drawn, whether the eye can see to draw it or not, at which, on the one side, is found the product of God's wisdom, and on the other the product of man's.

It is not necessary, in connection with such a scheme, to repeat the argument urged before, to show the difference, generic and manifest, between a Bible in all its truths a revelation from God, and a Bible not in all its truths a revelation. The application to the case of inspiration is plain and direct. There is a distinction of an important kind between a volume all of whose statements are equally and alike inspired, and a volume whose statements are some of them inspired in full,—some of them, in different measures, partially inspired,—and some of them not inspired at all. It cannot be the same book in the two cases. A human pen may have filled up the page where the finger of God has no more than partly written His word. The wisdom and the truth of man may be there in exact proportion as we do not find there the wisdom and the truth of God. In the combined result of the two, it may be impossible for any eye, however critical, to discriminate between the human and the divine. But the difference is there, and all the worse because indiscernible. In a Bible in which are mingled, under the same form of speech, the infallible and the fallible, the inspired and the human, there will be, *in the first place*, no divine certainty to satisfy the understanding, and on which the faith of a believer may rest as on the one foundation of God's veracity. And, *in the second place*, in such a record, speaking sometimes with the voice of God and sometimes with that of man, and yet, with no distinction of voice, to tell what is God's and what is man's, there will be no supreme authority making manifest its power and right to rule the judgments of our reason, and to bind its obligations on the conscience.

The Scriptures would not be what they claim to be, had they been written in part by inspiration and in part without it, even although the contents in both cases had been the same as respects the facts and doctrines embodied in them. In the one instance, they would have come to us confirmed by the truthfulness and enforced by the authority of God. In the other instance, there would have been discovered no divine truth in them to be a foundation for a divine faith, and no

infallible authority to be a law for belief and obedience. In adjusting the conditions of the question as between the friends and opponents of inspiration, it must never be forgotten that there is a difference, involving all that is of importance in the controversy, between an inspiration equal and plenary throughout all Scripture, and all classes of its truths, and an inspiration partial, or peculiar to some truths, to the exclusion of others.

But both the nature of the case and the position taken up by Scripture itself in regard to it, forbid the theory of an inspiration unequal and different in kind or degree in different passages of the Bible.

Viewed as an hypothesis, assumed for the purpose of explaining the difficulties of inspiration, and apart altogether from its running counter to the proper evidence on the point, it is in itself inadmissible from the very nature of the case. It is hardly possible to make the idea of an inspiration of different degrees to be intelligible or consistent with itself. In admitting the fact of the supernatural agency of God in connection with the production of the Bible in any shape, it admits the existence of an element which cannot be measured by our standards, and laid off into its three degrees of power, or its five varieties of extent, so as to be either consistent with itself, or even intelligible in human thought. The greater and the less of a supernatural power, the higher and lower degrees of what is a miracle, is a very near approach to a contradiction in terms, if it has any meaning at all. All parties confess this in the case of a miracle of power: it is simply impossible to speak of the greater or less degrees of the supernatural involved in it; the higher and the lower kinds of the almighty agency involved in the matter, if such there be, are things of which it is beyond our power to judge, or even conceive.

So far as regards a revelation, it is possible indeed to speak of degrees of it, in the sense that more or less information is supernaturally communicated,—that a greater or smaller number of truths is given in presentation to the prophet's mind. But

it is impossible to understand the idea of a greater or less degree in the inspiration of these truths, or in the miraculous transference of them from the mind of the prophet to the page in which he wrote. If any given truth or fact is supernaturally written down in the inspired record through divine agency, it is a result which, in so far as human conception can apprehend it, does not admit of degrees greater or less. Indeed, the very attempt to establish such a theory only proves that those who pretend to do so have gotten beyond the bounds both of what has been revealed in Scripture, and of what is legitimate or possible in a sound philosophy. They are attempting to theorize upon the supernatural, and to explain what must ever be mysterious. The explanation, if it were possible, whether satisfactory or not, would prove that inspiration was not one of the secret things of God that He does when He goes forth in the majesty of His unapproachable power. It would prove that the Bible is not His work,—which none but He, in His supernatural control over the prophet and the prophet's words, and yet in entire harmony with his human agency and will, could accomplish.

Reason itself might well rebuke the presumptuous error of such a theory, but the silence of Scripture rebukes it more; and if we were wise with the wisdom which it teaches, we would be silent too.

There is nothing more remarkable in the Bible than the matter-of-fact style in which it deals with the supernatural, which it has so often to chronicle in its narratives,—recording the occurrence as if nothing could be more natural, and adding no note of wonder, and still less of explanation, in connection with it. The historians had risen to the level of the miraculous events which they relate, and walk within the shadow of the supernatural as amidst the haunts of familiar things. Oftentimes gifted personally with the power of miracles, and going forth daily to exercise it, the almighty presence is so intensely realized by them, that they need no explanation themselves, and attempt to give none to others, of the signs and wonders which they record: they



do not seem to feel as if others would seek explanation ; they do not trouble themselves even to tell that none can be given. As men who had been in the mount with God, they come down to speak unto their fellow-men ; and if there be a mysterious glory about them, they leave it to explain itself. There is the fullest and most unmistakeable evidence in the statements of Scripture, that its writers wrote as they were moved by the Holy Ghost ; but there is not one statement from first to last that pretends to explain the mystery of inspiration, and no attempt is made to lift the veil that divides between the observed result in an infallible record and its supernatural source in God. There is but one word employed in Scripture to declare its own inspiration, and one method of speaking about the divine character impressed upon its text ; there is not a single statement that can be construed into a theory apportioning different kinds of divine agency to different passages in the narrative, and meting out five or three degrees of supernatural power to some truths, and not to others. The theory is entirely gratuitous, invented as a mere hypothesis to reconcile certain apparent imperfections in the record with the existence of inspiration ; and effecting a reconciliation only by making divine inspiration to be an imperfect and fallible thing. The so-called inspiration makes its peace with error in no other way than by allowing error to have a rightful place under the shelter of its name.

All these theories of inspiration are wrong, simply because they are theories,—human and unauthorized attempts to explain a supernatural mystery, the reality of which is plainly asserted in Scripture, but the solution of which is left untouched. But some of them are still further wrong, as running counter to the facts which they are framed to explain.

III. There is a *third point* in our definition of inspiration to be noted, although it is so obvious and undoubted in itself, that it requires almost no illustration.

We have defined inspiration to be a divine work wrought for a certain purpose, beyond the limits of which its aim does not extend. It was wrought for the purpose of transferring into human language, and putting on record with infallible accuracy, the divine revelation given to be recorded for the permanent use of the Church. But, this object accomplished, inspiration was not given for other purposes or to other effects. It was neither intended nor fitted to secure results beyond this one. In particular, the gift of supernatural inspiration was not bestowed in connection with other truths than what constituted the special communication made to the prophet; and it was not bestowed to vest in the person of the inspired man any divine or spiritual blessings apart from the official qualifications necessary for his office as the infallible recorder of the revelation given to him.

Both in the case of oral and written inspiration, it was invariably connected with and limited to the revelation to be spoken or recorded. The oral prophesying or preaching of the order of prophets in the apostolic Church exhibited the twofold feature of revelations from the Lord, and inspiration co-extensive with the revelations. Their prophesyings were the supernatural utterance of truths communicated to them by God for the purpose. There was no inspiration given to their own thoughts which they might utter, but only to the thoughts of God. And in the case of the written page of Scripture, the inspiration is uniformly connected with, and limited to, the supernatural revelation communicated. The revelation and the inspiration may or may not have been contemporaneous in the case of the prophet; but the inspiration was so connected with the revelation, that it never went beyond or fell short of the latter: it never gave infallible utterance to any truths of the prophet's own, but only to those communicated from above.

It is quite possible, indeed, to conceive of inspiration being conferred for the purpose of recording other facts and truths than those of revelation. But we have no actual example furnished us of such a case, and no allusion to any;

and the absence of revelation where inspiration is granted, would have deprived the record of such facts and truths of the infallible certainty and divine authority which, when the two are combined, we actually witness. Those theories of inspiration which separate between it and revelation, in the way of asserting all the Bible to be inspired, but only limited portions to be revealed, contradict the purpose for which inspiration was given, and which limits it in every case within the bounds of the revelation. There are examples mentioned in Scripture of revelation without inspiration, but none that we are acquainted with of inspiration without revelation, or beyond the extent of it.

In adjusting the state of the question between the friends and opponents of an infallible Bible, we are entitled to take for granted, as a point previously admitted or proved, that the Scripture volume, as we now possess it, contains a supernatural communication from God, and that there is no portion of those writings embraced in it which does not. If in any scheme of inspiration this fact is expressly or implicitly denied,—if it is maintained that some portions of Scripture do not contain a revelation from God, the denial opens up a wider controversy than any in which the point of inspiration is involved. It opens up the question as to the proper canon of Scripture, or as to what are and what are not those written records which contain the supernatural communication of God's mind and will to us. Such a question must be dealt with by the Christian apologist upon its own merits, and decided by those methods of evidence appropriate to it. If there be in our Bible any book or portion of a book not truly given by a supernatural revelation from God, let it be displaced from the canon as not entitled to be there. After having satisfactorily demonstrated that it is not a part of God's revelation to man, no reasonable friend of inspiration will attempt to prove that it is inspired.

The divine operation of the Spirit of God on the prophet—giving him the authority and the power to embody, in supernatural form and with unerring fidelity, truth fitted to

be, to the Church of Christ throughout all time, a foundation for its hope, and a rule for duty—was restricted to the truth which He Himself had revealed, and which carried with it His own infallibility. Other truths than those of revelation, from whatever quarter they came, and however much certain in themselves, found no place in the inspired record. Even truths substantially known to the prophet before, were present to the mind of the Spirit, and came forth from the repository of eternal truth, moulded and shaped after the divine idea; that in that form, and no other, they might, by the inspired man, be fixed for ever in the unchangeable page.

Further still: Inspiration was not only limited to the express purpose of recording God's truth, and not man's, but it was restricted also to the bestowment on the inspired man of no gifts beyond those necessary to the accomplishment of this one purpose. Even the power of outward miracles, although a supernatural gift like itself, was not an invariable accompaniment of the inspiration conferred on inspired men. Numerous instances occur in Scripture of men whose lips were clothed with supernatural truth, but whose hands did no miracle of outward wonder. And especially, inspiration was not, in all cases, a token from God of the favour conferred on the prophet; nor in any case a measure that could tell the amount of spiritual and gracious illumination he enjoyed within his own soul. As if it were pointedly to warn us against the mistake of identifying the two, we have examples in Scripture of men in whom they were disjoined, as well as of men in whom they were conjoined,—of men commissioned by God to speak the words of His infallible truth, who were destitute of personal illumination in divine things, as well as of men eminent for saving knowledge of the truth, but strangers entirely to prophetic gifts.

The mysterious gift of inspiration, and the gracious communion of the inspired man with God, are no doubt commonly witnessed together, in the instance of God's own saints. But in no case can we safely take the prophetic office as a conclusive evidence of saintship, or the official qualifications and

endowments of the prophet as an index of the extent of his personal knowledge of spiritual things, or of his personal attainments in the divine life. The infallibility that guaranteed the perfect trustworthiness of all utterances officially spoken or written by the inspired man, was limited to them : it did not extend beyond these boundaries, and was not given for wider purposes ; it afforded no guarantee whatever for the personal exemption of the inspired man from error, either in word or life, in matters not directly involved in his official teaching or acting.

It would be a mistake of a serious kind, to imagine that, in proportion to the nearness of communion personally that the Scripture writers enjoyed or maintained with God, must be the credibility of what they have written ; and that the faith of the Church in after generations was made to depend on the personal knowledge of the truth which might be possessed by those who were employed officially to record it. It would be an equal mistake in the opposite direction, to think that the sins of inspired men in other matters, whether sins in word or conduct as men, deprived them, in their office as prophets, of a right to be regarded as possessed of that infallible truth and divine authority which was not theirs originally or personally, but theirs only as instruments of God to declare His will.

The statements of Scripture undoubtedly lead us to believe that, in the case of inspired men, inspiration did not belong to them at all times, or for all purposes. The common language employed to denote the operation of the divine power in inspiration, plainly implies that it was not a constant or uninterrupted power, working always without any interval of cessation, and keeping the prophet continually under its influence. It was only when *in the Spirit*, and not at other times, that the man was inspired. It was only when the *word of the Lord* came unto him, and not when it did not come, that he uttered the infallible word of the Lord. It was only when *moved by the Spirit*, and not on other occasions when he was not moved, that he spake or wrote as the Spirit influenced him. Such general statements of the fact of inspiration



sufficiently indicate that it did not belong to men who enjoyed it, at all times, or for every purpose ; and that when it did not belong to them, they were left to speak and act not under infallible guidance, but simply under the ordinary motives and according to the natural principles which on other occasions actuated and determined their conduct and speech.

And the same conclusion is established by the examples which occur in Scripture of persons inspired at one time, but not inspired at another, and left to the guidance of the common laws which regulate men's behaviour in ordinary life. With respect to the prophets generally under the Old Testament, we are informed that instances occurred in which they themselves did not understand the truths they were inspired to foretell ; and that, after having recorded them under infallible direction from God, they were left, without inspiration or revelation from Him, to sit down, with no more than the ordinary helps to human study and inquiry, to search out the meaning of what they themselves had written. Specific examples are frequent under the ancient dispensation, of men sent, under the power of inspiration, to declare the message of God, who at other times, and after the particular message was spoken, were strangers to its guidance. Once at least, in the course of her life, if we are to believe the apostle, Sarah spoke by inspiration of God, although utterly unacquainted with its controlling power in her ordinary speech. Peter, when he dissembled at Antioch, was not under the same infallible inspiration as when he wrote his Epistles. Taking the Scripture account of inspiration as it is to be gathered both from general statements and from particular examples of it, we are shut up to the conclusion that it was a gift given for a specific purpose, and for nothing more ; that it conferred no personal endowment on the inspired man of exemption from errors in word or life at other times ; and that it was rigorously limited to the one object of recording the message given by God for the purpose of being recorded, and of doing so with unerring fidelity.

In speaking of inspiration, we must speak of it as a fact, for a knowledge of which we are indebted exclusively to revelation, taking it in the shape and with the features which are there represented as belonging to it. If, therefore, we would fairly adjust the conditions of the debate between the advocates and opponents of the doctrine, we must accept and define it in the limited sense in which it is there taught,—as a supernatural influence restricted to a specific purpose, and not aiming beyond it. In dealing with it in this way, a vast number of the common objections to inspiration are at once seen to be irrelevant.

Summing up, then, the remarks of the present chapter and the preceding, which have been directed mainly to the object of clearing the ground for the discussion and laying down beforehand the conditions of the question, we have arrived at certain pretty definite results in connection with it.

These two propositions combined make up the ancient and orthodox doctrine of the Church in regard to the inspired Scriptures,—namely, first, that they contain a supernatural revelation of truth given by God; and, secondly, that they contain that truth in a record inspired and free from all addition or mixture of error.

By a revelation is meant objective truth, presented to the prophet in a supernatural manner by God. (1.) It is supernatural truth, in contradistinction to truth which nature or reason may teach, and because it is the very idea that came from the mind of God, and was presented to the mind of the prophet in revelation. (2.) It is truth objective, and not subjective,—a presentation of knowledge made to man from without, and not from within, and therefore broadly to be distinguished from those results of thought and feelings which the spiritual and intellectual nature of man, when taught in the school of nature, or even of grace, may realize. (3.) And it is a supernatural presentation of objective truth which, as contained in Scripture, pervades the whole record, and is not confined to certain portions of

it, or to particular kinds of fact or truth, to the exclusion of others.

By inspiration is meant the statement in the written page of Scripture, made with infallible accuracy through the supernatural operation of the Spirit, of the objective truth revealed by God for the purpose. (1.) It is an inspiration supernatural, and not either natural or gracious, and therefore to be contrasted with the fruits of the natural illumination of a man under the ordinary agency of the Spirit of God, exerted upon his moral and intellectual faculties, and also with the extraordinary illumination of a Christian through the power of the Spirit in grace. (2.) The supernatural influence which effects it is in its nature and operation inexplicable, but not inconsistent with the free agency of the inspired man acting according to its ordinary laws, and not different in different portions of Scripture, but equally present throughout it all. (3.) And it is supernatural inspiration co-extensive with the revelation which it records, but not manifested in connection with other truths, or in the inspired man at other times, or to other effects than in recording the revelation given.

It is necessary thus distinctly to set forth the sense in which we understand the two fundamental ideas of revelation and inspiration, in order that the shortcomings of those incomplete schemes which are now abroad in the Church may not be palmed upon us in disguise for scriptural views. In maintaining these views, we have no occasion to deny or undervalue the use of reason, or religious intuition, or spiritual insight, or by whatever other name the Revealer may be called, in its search after divine truth. We are not called upon to estimate the extent or value of its discoveries, whether coming from without or from within; and we need have no jealousy of these so-called Revelations, provided they are not put in the place, and advocated to the exclusion, of a supernatural revelation presented to us from God. In like manner, we have no occasion to deny the doctrine of the natural or the gracious illumination by the Spirit of God, the former common to all

men, and the latter to all Christian men; and we have no temptation to look upon with suspicion, or unduly to limit, the amount of the teaching or the products of the illumination by this secret Inspirer, provided these are not made to exclude the doctrine of the true and supernatural inspiration of the chosen men who wrote the Bible.

There may be, and there is, a discovery by reason of God, and the things of God, within certain limits, competent to all; there may be, and there is, a fuller discovery by the religious insight of the Christian; but over and above that, there is a proper and miraculous presentation of truth from God. There may be, and is, the light of reason and conscience in all, and the teaching of the Spirit in every believer, and there are the products of these seen in the moral teachings of the heathen, or the Christian authorship of the Church; but over and above that, there are the supernatural gifts of the same Spirit, to enable prophets infallibly to record His word. And it is impossible to deny the orthodox doctrine of a supernatural revelation, and a supernatural inspiration, combined to make up one infallible Bible, except in one or other of two ways; either by saying that the thing is impossible, or that its existence has not been proved. With those who hold that the thing is impossible,—that is to say, with the deniers of the supernatural in any shape or circumstances,—we have at present nothing to do. The possibility of it must be taken for granted. Further still, the actual fact of the existence of the first of the two things now mentioned, or the reality of a supernatural revelation, must also be a matter held to be admitted on both sides. There remains only to be proved the second of the two things—namely, a supernatural inspiration.

In thus defining, in the sense now explained, a supernatural revelation and a supernatural inspiration, we wish to guard our position both on the one side and on the other. More than this is not necessary to the doctrine of a plenary inspiration, and would only encumber its friends in their attempts either to explain or establish it. But less than this does not

come up to the proper scriptural idea on the subject. In laying down these propositions, it is not pretended that the friends of inspiration are entitled to announce any arbitrary definition they please, and irrespective of the actual teaching of Scripture,—still less that any definition they may give will settle the question, or be accepted as a substitute for the proper proof. They believe, however, that these propositions contain the substance of what the Bible has made known on the subject; and they are ready to submit the Scripture evidence to establish this. But before doing so, it is necessary to disentangle the point at issue between the friends and opponents of Bible infallibility from all misunderstandings and from all theoretical speculations not essential to it, so as to lay down distinctly the doctrine that is held, and which it is our wish to prove.

The two propositions, as now explained, serve to define the proper conditions of the question, and will in no small degree assist in disencumbering the discussion of all irrelevant argument on the one side or the other, and of objections provoked only by a misunderstanding of the point in debate. They will also enable us to determine what is the kind of evidence appropriate to a question like that of inspiration, and sufficient or insufficient to establish it as a fact. In proceeding to the formal discussion of the evidence with a definition ready made, we in fact assume nothing that we are not entitled to assume; for we desire that the definition should be regarded in the meantime as only provisional,—subject to the test of the examination of Scripture on which we are about to enter; and to be recalled, or modified, or established, according to the result. But the time and space given to the preliminary consideration of the question at issue will not have been misapplied, if it has enabled us to proceed to an inquiry into the Scripture proof, with the ground in some manner cleared, and the conditions of the debate rightly adjusted. That examination, properly conducted, will serve two purposes: it will establish the accuracy of our definition, and it will exhibit the evidence for the reality of inspiration.



## CHAPTER VII.

### EVIDENCE PROPER TO INSPIRATION.

IF the distinction which has been prominently kept in view in our previous remarks be a sound one,—the distinction between a supernatural revelation and a supernatural inspiration,—it is plain that the question of evidence is not the same in regard to each. We hear of revelations made by God, and never meant to be recorded in any form,—revelations, therefore, in regard to which there could be no room for raising the controversy of their being inspired or not inspired. But in the case of revelations meant to be recorded, there is an opening for the question whether they have been recorded by God through the instrumentality of men, or committed to writing by men themselves, without supernatural intervention. In the one instance, we should have a supernatural communication from God embodied in the form of a supernatural record; in the other case, we should have the same supernatural communication contained in a merely human composition.

It is plain that these two things are not only widely different from each other, but are to be established and made good, through widely different kinds of evidence. The fact of a revelation from heaven contained in the Bible is the fact from which, as admitted by both parties, the controversy between the advocates and opponents of the plenary inspiration of the record starts. The evidence appropriate to the fact, and sufficient to establish it, is received by both parties, and not denied by either. If prophecies are found embodied in the record which, after the lapse of centuries, have been translated into actual facts in the history of the world, the fulfilment

may furnish a ground of belief that the prophecy has come from God. If the fundamental facts which constitute the gospel, and are contained in the Bible, whether supernatural or historical, have been avouched by the testimony of suffering and blood, we may have a warrant as strong as human truth can give that the religion is divine. If that religion, taken from the page of Scripture, has manifested its adaptation to the spiritual and intelligent nature of man in its fears and hopes, in its needs and desires, it may commend itself to the conscience in such a manner as to prove that it is of God. Especially if it shall work its strange experiments of conviction and conversion on the sinner's soul, and, through means of its doctrine believed, give life and peace such as man cannot give, it may establish for itself an experimental evidence that the doctrine did not come from man.

But all these kinds and methods of evidence apply to the system of religion contained in the Bible, proving it to be supernatural, and not to the Bible itself as the record of it, and as a record supernatural. They would equally avail to prove that the religion was true, even although it had been embodied and written down in nothing but a human record. Prophecy, miracle, the internal evidence, the experimental witness which it has in itself, demonstrate the truth to be from God in the sense that He has revealed it; but leave untouched the question whether or not the book which contains the truth be also from God, in the sense that He has inspired it. Any human abstract of the Bible, embodying with sufficient accuracy and fulness an account of its prophecies, its miracles, and its doctrines, might evoke in its favour the same kind and nearly the same amount of evidence that the system of truth which it set forth was not human but divine; while it made no pretensions to that inspiration in its narrative which the Bible claims for itself. The fact of a supernatural revelation of truth given by God may be established by a kind of evidence which has little or no application to the fact of a supernatural inspiration.

Did the writers of the Scripture volume receive super-

natural ability and gifts to put in writing the revelation presented to them by God, or were they left to their own human powers of thought, and memory, and expression in recording it? That is one question, and altogether distinct, both in its meaning and in the evidence to substantiate it, from the other and prior question,—Did the writers receive an extraordinary revelation, to be recorded in any form? No doubt the consideration that the Bible contains a revelation from God, is itself a strong presumption in favour of the conclusion, that as a composition it is inspired and not human; for this reason, that we know of no communication made by God to any of His creatures, intended and destined for other parties, and for all time, that has not been transmitted through a supernatural channel, and because we cannot conceive how it could reach its destination and accomplish its end unless it were so. A revelation committed to the keeping of oral tradition must have perished within one or two generations, unless itself kept by the still more expensive and extraordinary provision of an infallible guardian and interpreter throughout all time. A revelation entrusted to a written record, the product of human pens, would not, in the same way as a divine, have carried with it either the unerring truth or the irresistible authority of God. And therefore we argue, that a revelation from heaven, to be permanent and universal, must also have been inspired.

Still this is no more than a presumption, and is not the primary or proper evidence for inspiration. All that we are entitled to say in regard to it is this, that God having, for grand and important ends in His spiritual economy, performed the first great miracle of revelation, would not, according to all human likelihood, allow the very object of a revelation, pointing as it does to all men and time, to be frustrated for the want of the second miracle of inspiration, if the latter was necessary to the end in view. If the object to be attained was by means of one man to put all men in the same position of nearness to God's truth; if it was meant, through the instrumentality of a few chosen from the many, to convey

to the latter the same measure of divine assurance, and to impose upon their understanding and conscience the same constraint of divine authority as the former experienced when the supernatural word was spoken in their ear, then an inspired as well as a revealed Bible was essential to the object. If we may argue from the intentions of God in His supernatural communications to the prophet, we would say that, in addition to the one miracle of revelation, there was needed inspiration too. And further, the fact itself of a miraculous revelation, apart from the intention, if it be admitted by the opponents of an infallible Bible, is itself a sufficient answer, at least in the way of an *argumentum ad hominem*, to the many objections made to inspiration from its supernatural character. Still it must be borne in mind that this is not the proper, or at least the primary, evidence for inspiration.

The supernatural endowment of certain men, in old times, to enable them to write an infallible book, is plainly a question of historical fact, which must be dealt with as other matters of fact which come up in controversy. Was one man out of many selected by God, and withdrawn from the rest, that he might be taken into the presence of uncreated wisdom, and receive both a supernatural revelation and the supernatural endowment necessary for him accurately to record it, so that his erring lips might be taught to speak, and his helpless hands guided to write, the passage with unerring fidelity? This was a matter of fact which, from the very necessity of the case, was known in the first instance only to the prophet himself, and to that God who called him to His foot. Inspiration, from its very nature, is one of those 'invisible miracles' of which Butler speaks, that do not, like outward signs and wonders, make their appeal to the external senses, and draw their evidence from the public testimony, which the eyes of many beholders might render to it. There was no miraculous sign put upon the forehead of the inspired man, known and read of all, and no voice from heaven audible in the ears of his fellow-men, that marked him as chosen of God out of the midst of them to minister to them in infallible truth. Men were often in-

spired who wrought no miracles themselves,—as, for instance, John the Baptist under the New Testament, and many of the prophets under the Old; so that we cannot hold signs and wonders wrought before the eye as the essential condition or primary evidence of inspiration.

Inspiration, indeed, was grafted into a miraculous system, and received its support in the way of evidence; the invisible miracle was confirmed by the visible signs of an economy in which they both equally found their place.

But inspired men, even when no workers of miracles themselves, could furnish an evidence of their inspiration both proper and sufficient to establish it. It rested on their own testimony, as the only witnesses who in the first instance were cognizant of the fact, and the only witnesses, therefore, who were able in the first instance to declare it. The secret transaction between their souls and God, when He invested them with supernatural gifts for inspiration, was unknown to others, and must have remained unknown, had it not been told by themselves, and vouched by their own testimony. That testimony might, in some instances, go forth confirmed by signs wrought by their own hands in order to confirm it; and in all instances of it, it was part and parcel of a system guaranteed by outward miracle. But in the first place, the inspiration of the prophet rested on the evidence of his own word as the proper, and indeed, primarily, the only evidence that could be given for it. As a fact known in the first instance only to themselves, the testimony of the inspired men is the appropriate and primary evidence for their inspiration.

Considerable misapprehension has often prevailed in connection with this point. The distinction between revelation and inspiration has been lost sight of, and men have been led to believe that the apologetical argument in the two cases was the same. The evidence that proves the reality of a supernatural revelation, has been considered identical with the evidence to prove the fact of its being inspired.

It is not difficult to trace, in the theology of the Reformation period and afterwards, a strong tendency on the part



of many to make the evidence for the divine and inspired character of the sacred volume to rest on the witness which it leaves in the heart of the individual believer. This tendency perhaps originated in, at all events was greatly strengthened by, the natural enough reaction from the Popish doctrine on the subject. The Popish Church had taught, in the strongest and most offensive terms, the dogma that the Church alone has authority to determine as a judge, instead of a witness, what is and what is not the word of God. In opposition to the Reformers, the most eminent of the Romanist controversialists had pointed to the infallible decrees of the councils as the only ground of certainty on the subject; and they had laboured to disparage any other evidence as irrelevant, or insufficient to discriminate between inspired and uninspired writings. In the earnestness of their contendings against such a doctrine, the Reformers in some instances were driven to the opposite extreme, undervaluing all external evidence as improper or superfluous, and appealing to the inward witness which the Bible creates in the mind, and the light which shines upon the individual conscience from its truths, as the sufficient and conclusive evidence of what was and what was not canonical Scripture.

In the Confessions of some of the early Protestant churches, such as the Helvetic and the French, and occasionally in the writings of the Reformers, such as Calvin,<sup>1</sup> the opinion is maintained, that we receive the books of Scripture not because the Church receives them as such, but because the Holy Spirit witnesses to our consciences that they proceed from God; and that hereby we know the canonical from the ecclesiastical. According to Whitaker, in his controversy with Bellarmine, the Scripture is *αὐτόπιστος*,<sup>2</sup> having its certainty and proof in itself; and Dr Owen,<sup>3</sup> in his discourses on the Divine Original of Scripture, tells us that the self-evidencing efficacy of it is such as, without any other testimony, to leave a man

<sup>1</sup> Calvin : Inst. lib. i. chap. 7, § 4, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Whitaker : Disput. Quest. iii. c. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Owen : Divine Original of Scripture, chap. ii. and chap. iv.

in no doubt, and to distinguish it by infallible signs and evidence from all words and writings not divine. Such extreme opinions as to the proper force of internal evidence in proving inspiration, were to a large extent a reaction from the opposite extreme of the Romanists, who, disparaging or denying all other evidence, asserted the necessity of a public and infallible authority in the Church as alone competent to decide the question. The influence of such a reaction is seen to exist, even in the present day, in the tendency to undervalue all the external or historical evidences in connection with the question of the canon, and to rest it mainly or exclusively upon the subjective impression or witness which the truth creates for itself within the heart.

But these views had another source beyond the earnest recoil in the Reformed churches from the Popish principle of the impossibility of any individual having a certainty as to the divine authority of Scripture, apart from the decree of an infallible church.

These opinions, partly at least, originated in the forgetfulness or practical denial of the distinction which we have all along endeavoured to keep prominently in view, between a supernatural revelation given by God, and a supernatural inspiration of the record containing it. This distinction overlooked, naturally enough led to the mistake of counting the evidence that is sufficient for the one of these, to be the same as the quite different evidence that avails for the other.

The principle that was so earnestly advocated by the Reformers, of the self-evidencing power of the Bible, and of the witness which the truth has within itself, and apart from outward testimony, is one both true in itself, and most valuable in its applications within its own proper province. But they sometimes misstated its apologetic range and object, and gave it work to do which it was never intended or fitted to accomplish. The self-evidencing efficacy of which Dr Owen speaks, belongs to the revelation, or rather the contents of the revelation, and not to the inspiration, or the form in which it is recorded. It may suffice to show that the Bible con-

tains a communication of truth from God, but not to show that the record of the truth which commends itself to the conscience is in all its parts and sentences inspired, and not human. The Bible is *αὐτόπιστος*, in the sense of embodying a message of divine truth that, by its adaptation to the wants and capacities of man's moral and spiritual being, lays hold upon the soul, and will not let it go, and so proves itself to be divine truth; but not in the sense of showing that the medium through which it is conveyed is an inspired book, and not a human. Even a human exposition or compendium of the divine and saving truth which the Bible teaches, with no pretensions to inspiration, might have, and indeed has often possessed, a divine power in the soul, sufficient to convince the unbelievers that although the words were man's, the truth was God's. The internal evidences are quite sufficient to prove the religion of the Bible to be divine, but not the Bible itself to be divinely inspired.

In thus drawing a distinction between the supernatural and saving truth which the Scriptures contain, and the inspired and supernatural form in which it is recorded, and in restricting the evidential power of the inward witness which they carry about with them to the former, and denying its application to the latter, we are doing no injustice to its force or value as evidence. We are only limiting it to its proper place and office as a witness for the life-giving truth, through whatever medium it is presented to us, and not for the particular form in which it is presented. Even although the heavenly treasure should be contained in earthen vessels, it will prove itself, to those who receive it, to be heavenly still. Even although the truth of God should reach the understanding and conscience only through the medium of an uninspired Bible, there is a self-evidencing power in it which will show it to be from God.

And not only so, but in all cases the ultimate ground of certitude which a believer has in the Scriptures as embodying a divine message to him,—a word of living grace to his soul,—is that internal proof which it gives by the successful experi-

ment that it performs upon himself, so that his own nature, quickened and alive, becomes the evidence, better than any other, for the fact that it comes from God. That secret mark of divinity which belongs to divine truth, and which no man knoweth but he who has himself received it, is the best and the final resting-place of a Christian's faith. But this is a very different matter from the relevant or sufficient proof that can satisfy a man that the Bible, and every book of the Bible, is divinely inspired.

The heavenly truth may have been embodied in a human record, or in a record partly human and partly divine, or finally, in a record all of which equally has been written under miraculous and infallible influence from above. The kind of evidence that is enough to prove the divine origin of the truth believed, is not the kind of evidence appropriate to the question raised as to the shape in which it has been written in Scripture. The judgment of Richard Baxter comes nearer to the point, when he says: 'Where is the man that ever knew the canon from the apocryphal before it was told him, and without tradition? I confess, for my own part, I could never boast of any such testimony or light of the Spirit or reason; neither of which, without human testimony or tradition, would have made me believe that the book of Canticles is canonical and written by Solomon, and the book of Wisdom apocryphal and written by Philo, as some think; or that Paul's Epistle to the Laodiceans and others is apocryphal, and the Second and Third Epistle of John canonical. Nor could I have known all or any historical books, such as Joshua, Judges, Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Chronicles, Ezra, Nehemiah, to be written by divine inspiration, but by tradition; nor could know all or any of those books to be God's word which contain mere positive constitutions, as Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, etc., were it not for the same tradition; nor could I have known that any of those books were written by divine inspiration which contain, besides such history and positives, nothing but the truths which are known by the light of nature without further supernatural revelation, if it had not

been for tradition; nor could I have known those books to have been written by divine inspiration which speak of mere supernatural things (either historical, as Christ's incarnation, resurrection, etc., or doctrinal), had not tradition or human testimony assured me that these are the books which those holy men wrote, and that such undoubted, uncontested miracles were wrought for the confirmation of their doctrine.<sup>1</sup>

From the very nature of the case, the testimony of the inspired man is, in the first instance, the proper evidence for his inspiration. He was cognizant of the fact that God called him up into the mount, and did invest him there with supernatural endowments unerringly to record His revelation; and he *only* originally was cognizant of it. As a witness, competent by direct knowledge and complete veracity, he could depone to the fact, and none other could. It was a secret between the prophet and God. There was none with him in that solitary presence-chamber of divine wisdom where he heard the words of the Eternal spoken to him, and received supernatural commission and power infallibly to write them. No testimony except his own could avail to prove what was done there: it was the kind of proof pertinent to the fact, and indeed primarily the only kind possible for the fact; and it was sufficient. In testifying to his own inspiration, he spake of what he knew as a fact; and if the historical veracity of the writers of Scripture is admitted on both sides, then it must also be admitted that he spake truly.

The fact of a revelation, and the fact of an inspiration, are in the same predicament as regards the personal testimony of the men to whom they were vouchsafed. Other kinds of evidence, indeed, are available to prove the fact of a revelation, such as prophecy and history, the internal and experimental witness; and in this respect it differs from inspiration, which can derive no more than a presumptive proof in its favour from such quarters. But in respect of the personal testimony of the prophet to the reality of it, revelation stands on the same footing as inspiration. They both

<sup>1</sup> Baxter: Saint's Rest. Preface to Second Part.



belong to the class of invisible miracles, of which other men are not cognizant. They are both to be established as facts in the first instance by the personal testimony of the prophet, as the only witness competent by direct knowledge to testify to them. In both cases (if the veracity of the witnesses is a point to be taken for granted as conceded by all parties), the testimony of the prophet must be held as conclusive of the fact. That testimony may be confirmed and ratified by all the guarantees by which the truthfulness of human testimony is in ordinary cases established. Beyond these, it may have the seal of miracles added as an immutable safeguard. But in both,—the cases of a revelation from God, and of an inspiration by God,—the primary and direct evidence of the fact is the personal testimony of the prophet, as in the first instance the only one competent to declare it. In so far as regards this evidence, there is no more difficulty in the case of a man who bears witness to an inspiration with which he has been endowed by God, than in the case of a man who testifies to a revelation that he has received from God.

It is of some importance to understand this point, because difficulties have been alleged to attach to the evidence of inspiration which are not felt in connection with a revelation.

When the Apostle John in Patmos received and recorded the supernatural communication which told him of the things which are and the things which shall be hereafter, there was no human eye but his own that saw the vision, and no human ear but his own that heard the voice that spake with him. The evidence that the Church of Christ had at the time for the fact of such a revelation being then and there vouchsafed, was ultimately the testimony of the apostle himself, as the only one who knew the fact and could tell it. That testimony was confirmed by his proved veracity as a man; it was still further confirmed by his miraculous gifts as an apostle. But the proof is to be traced back, in its last resort, to the trustworthiness of his solitary witness-bearing as sufficient to substantiate the fact. We do not hesitate to receive it as true, although he has not told us how the miraculous com-

munication from God was certified to him to be a reality, and not a mental illusion, or by what tokens he knew it to be a fact and not a fancy. The early Church did not need to assume that John was a prophet, and had received revelations from the Lord, and that he spoke by revelation, when he told them that his vision in Patmos was revealed, before they believed his assertion. Even although no miracle had subsequently been wrought to confirm his testimony, and although he had not spoken by revelation when he assured them that the word had come to him from the Lord, yet his witness, as that of a man who knew the fact, and was truthful to tell it, was entitled to be believed.

Once more, when the Evangelist Luke relates the 'invisible miracle' of the miraculous conception of the Son of God, he speaks of a matter that could not be known to himself or to any other from his own personal knowledge,—which did not appeal to the senses of any one, and could not be established by mere outward observation. From the very nature of the case, it was a fact that rested solely upon the testimony of those to whom God had spoken it in secret, and who by the revelation were both made to know it themselves, and constituted the proper witnesses of it to others. Had the testimony of Luke stood alone in Scripture for the mysterious fact to which he witnesses, it would have been enough for the faith of the Church of Christ, even although in this particular instance it would have been the testimony of one whose veracity as a man was not, so far as we have ground to know, additionally confirmed by the display in his own person of miraculous powers. No more has the evangelist than has the apostle informed us by what process the revelation was made to him, or how he was guarded against the possibility of his being deceived as to its reality. Neither is it necessary that we take for granted that he had a revelation, before we can believe his statement that the secret of the Saviour's birth was actually revealed to him.

It is precisely the same in regard to the case of inspiration. The evidence proper and sufficient to prove the truth of the

fact, is the testimony of the men whom God inspired. They alone knew when and how the supernatural powers were given to them, to qualify them for the task to which they were called; and they alone are competent, by knowledge of the fact, to testify to it. The only proper question is, Was their testimony that of honest and trustworthy men? No more than in the case of John, when his solitary ear listened to the voice that spake with him in Patmos,—no more than in the case of Luke, when the awful fact of the miraculous conception of the Son of God was revealed to him,—no more than in the case of any man to whom a supernatural revelation was granted,—were there other witnesses at hand who could hear the words, or see the hand, that invested the inspired man in the moment of his inspiration with a commission to record in the Scripture the communication made to him in secret. In so far as regards the question of the evidence of the men to whom God gave His supernatural revelation, or endowed with His supernatural inspiration, the matter is precisely the same in the two cases.

And the difficulties are no more in the one instance than in the other.

If the evidence of the prophet in both cases is in the first place the proper and direct proof, the question may still, in the case of inspiration, be raised, how he knew that he was inspired by God, and that the Holy Ghost had come upon him, and that he was not the victim of some mental delusion. Whatever mystery or difficulty there may be in this, it is not peculiar to inspiration, but is common to it with revelation also. The answer to be given is the same, and as effectual in the one case as in the other.

We have not been told, because we could not understand, how any man was miraculously filled with the divine wisdom in the case of revelation; and we have as little been told, because we could not better understand, how any man was supernaturally endowed with the divine power in the case of inspiration. We do not know, and have not had explained to us, either the process through which Paul heard unspeakable

words, or the other and analogous process by which he wrote inspired words; as a mere man, it was as little possible for him to receive the one as to utter the other. But we do know, that it would be to limit God in a way in which the least of His intelligent creatures are not limited, to say that He cannot, like them, communicate His thoughts to others, and make these other parties certain that the thoughts are His. And we know also that it would be a no less daring limitation of the Almighty, to say that He cannot, after the communication is given, furnish them with complete assurance of His commission, and with supernatural ability to record it. The supernatural intervention of God with the prophets, for the purpose of communicating His mind to theirs, alike with His supernatural intervention with the same prophets for the purpose of enabling them infallibly to write it, are ultimate facts which, like the instinctive impressions of primary truths made upon the human mind by the same God, do not admit of explanation, and are certain to the mind just because they do not. The contact of the finite mind with the Infinite, whether for the purpose of revelation or inspiration, must, from the very nature of the thing, be one of those ultimate facts which are undeniably sure, just because they cannot be accounted for in any other way than that they are due to God.

But if the evidence of inspiration properly rests upon the testimony of the inspired men, the additional question may be raised, whether we are not compelled by the exigencies of the argument to assume that they were inspired before we can receive their testimony to their inspiration. This, however, is an unwarrantable inference from our statement. The fact of inspiration rests for its proof on precisely the same basis, in this respect, as that of revelation. We do not require to take for granted that the authors of the Bible had a revelation given to them, before we can believe their assertion that it is revealed. The fact of a revelation from God being contained in the Bible, is no doubt itself a revealed truth. But in order to prove the reality of the fact, all that

we have to do, in the first instance, is to ascertain that the men who profess to have received a revelation are honest men, who knew what they said, and were therefore entitled to be believed when they tell us that they did receive it.

In like manner, we do not require to take for granted that the penmen of the Bible were inspired men, before we believe their assertion that they were inspired. The truth of inspiration is undoubtedly an inspired truth. But to justify our belief in their assertions, all that we have to do, in the first place, is to see, not that they were inspired men, but honest men, who could not be deceived in what they said, and who would not deceive others. The consideration that the fact of a revelation from God is a revealed truth, does not supersede the other consideration that it is a truth which can be proved from nature apart from revelation; and so the circumstance that inspiration is a doctrine asserted and guaranteed by inspired men, does not set aside the other circumstance that it can be established on independent grounds, and by men whether counted to be inspired or not. In adjusting the proper state of the question as to the kind of proof required, we are under no necessity to demand infallible witnesses for the fact any more than for the corresponding fact of revelation. In both cases we are contented with those ordinary but sure grounds of moral evidence, on which we believe other historical events, the best accredited and most undoubted.

It is proper that, in dealing with the question of evidence, we should identify as virtually and substantially the same, in the first instance, the ground on which a revelation as a fact rests, and the ground on which inspiration as a fact rests. In neither case is there any secret or illegitimate begging of the question before proceeding to the proof. Both of these are, in the first place, historical facts, that can be substantiated by the ordinary methods of historical evidence, apart altogether from their character as revealed truths, for the evidence of which we can point to the word of God.

The historical fact, that the natural light common to all men has once and again been supplemented by a supernatural



light, that has broken through the darkness of this earth, and shone miraculously into the minds of a few out of many of our race, is one that can legitimately and sufficiently be established by the human testimony of the men that were the depositaries of it. Judged of by the ordinary methods and principles of historical evidence, the proof is as valid as that on which we believe the most certain historical events in the past. But open the record of the revelation given, and *there* the fact is declared as itself a revealed truth, which, if the Bible commends itself to our conscience by its internal or other evidence, comes to us from the testimony, not of man, but of God.

Again, the historical fact that the Holy Ghost, the third person of the adorable Godhead, did at sundry times descend on holy men of old with supernatural gifts, to qualify them to write with unerring fidelity the word revealed, is also a fact that can be relevantly and fully demonstrated by the human witness of the men who had in their own souls the experience of His miraculous power. Here too the proof is legitimate and conclusive, judging of it as we would of the proof of other historical facts of a similar kind that come up in controversy to be believed or disbelieved. But once more open the Bible, and the same fact meets you as taught in its pages—a truth of revelation resting on the authority of God. These two aspects of the facts are not contradictory, nor the one of them exclusive of the other. Both of them are to be taken into account, and both of them are true. Inspiration, like revelation, is an historical fact which can be established on its proper grounds of proof, in the same way as any fact of profane history, the most familiar and best accredited. It is also an announcement and doctrine of revelation, which, in the case of those who receive a revelation on its proper evidence, comes to them in addition with the seal and authority of God.

The advocates of inspiration, though thus contented to place the fact, in the first instance, on the grounds of ordinary moral and historical proof, renounce in doing so nothing that gives strength and conclusiveness to the evidence. In the order of the argument they begin with the testimony of men, but in

the course of it they add to that evidence the witness of God. Taking the lower ground, held in common by the advocates and opponents of inspiration, of the historical veracity of Scripture, and postponing for a time its higher claims as supernaturally given, we find its authors expressly asserting the two facts of the revelation that they have received from God, and of the inspiration that has been given them to record it. We ask nothing more than the concession from our opponents of the perfect historical veracity of those men, in order to be in circumstances to demand an unreserved belief both in revelation and in inspiration, on the ground of this human testimony.

But, taking up a position in advance, and standing on the common ground, held by both parties, of a supernatural revelation, contained in a credible human record, we once more appeal to the many assertions of its own inspiration contained in Scripture, as a fact made known by God, and which, unless its historical credibility is to be denied, must be accepted as a doctrine forming part of the revelation He has given; and, on the ground of the doctrine being revealed, we now demand that it shall be accepted as a truth of God. The one witness is not inconsistent with the other, but rather an addition to it. In the course of the argument, inspiration passes from the lower level of a human to the higher level of a divine truth.

So much for the evidence for inspiration in the first instance given forth by the writers of Scripture as the primary and pertinent witnesses for the fact.

But this evidence may rest not only on the common foundation of all credible testimony, the complete knowledge and perfect veracity of these witnesses, but also on the peculiar foundation of miracles as the seal of God for confirmation of the word of man. In many instances, though not in all, the inspired men who wrote the Bible were the extraordinary agents of God, endowed with His miraculous gifts. The power of working miracles, and the gift of inspiration, were not uniformly conjoined in the same person; so that the one cannot be regarded as the condition or proof of the other.

But the inspired man, in asserting his own inspiration before the face of his fellow-men, might not unreasonably appeal, in confirmation of his assertion, to the fact,—if so it was in his own case,—that he gave ocular demonstration, by his signs and wonders and mighty deeds, that he was the supernatural agent of God in immediate communication with the Almighty. Apart from the claim made to inspiration, miracles were but the signs of a power that came from God. But in combination with that claim, miracles became the divine seal to the testimony of the inspired men, strengthening and substantiating it by the warrant of the Most High. To be commissioned to wield the supernatural power of God before the face of men, may be a gift more humble and less exalted than to declare His wisdom through the inspiration of His Spirit. But the miracle of power comes from the same source as the miracle of inspiration; and when the two are conjoined in one person, the one authenticates the other. It is impossible, perhaps, to gather from Scripture any general principle to account for the separation or combination of the mysterious gifts; but when God did join them in the case of His prophets, the outward wonder wrought by a man's hand was the seal of the claim of inspiration put forth on behalf of his lips.

Even in the case of inspired men, not themselves workers of miracles, it is not to be forgotten that they formed part and parcel of a miraculous system which cast its halo of light and evidence around the revelation of which their writings were constituents. Of John the Baptist it is expressly told that he did no miracle. But his own claim to be regarded as a prophet of the Lord, though attested by no supernatural sign wrought by his hand, was connected with prophecy before, and the divine seal of our Lord after, and partook of that supernatural confirmation which belonged to the whole of the New Testament system. Luke, so far as we know, was equally destitute of miraculous powers belonging to himself personally; but his evangelical narrative, even if it did not receive, as it is reasonably believed to have done, the special seal of Peter's apostolical guarantee, was accepted as

divine by apostolic men before miracles had ceased from the Church. The mutual recognition of one portion of Scripture by another,—and the necessity of regarding each not singly by itself, but as part of an organic whole, around which, as one revelation of God, the bond of this supernatural confirmation is wound for union and defence,—makes it impossible to divide between inspired men who wrought miracles, and inspired men who did not; or to insulate any part of Scripture from the general evidence which outward miracles furnished to the whole. Miracles were not the daily work of every man who was inspired by God to take part in committing to writing His revelation; but whether directly or indirectly, there is no part of that inspired record which is not possessed of the confirmation they furnish.

In thus making the evidence for inspiration to rest, in the first place, on an appeal to the testimony of the writers themselves, one important portion of the argument is derived from the connection of the various writers with each other, and the testimony given by one to the other. Whatever was the mysterious character of that transaction which took place between the prophets and God, when He summoned and empowered them to write all the words of His revelation in a book,—and whatever the solemnities that accompanied their investiture with office, and attested to their own minds the truth of their call, these could furnish no ground of certainty to other men as to the supernatural powers conferred, except from the testimony of those who in secret received, or of Him who, unseen, conferred them. But we may have the testimony of both these parties.

First, we have the witness of the inspired men themselves, when they tell us expressly that they received of the Lord what they delivered to us; or tell the same thing implicitly when they claim that what they wrote and spoke should be received with a faith, and obeyed with a submission, due only to the words of God. But next we have the witness of the only other party cognizant of the inspiration given, and therefore competent to declare the reality of it,—we have

the witness of God who bestowed the gift, when He speaks through the mouth of other prophets inspired by Him as they were, and taught by revelation, to recognise and declare to the world the inspiration of their fellow-prophets. The only two parties who had knowledge of the transaction are at one, and give separate yet harmonious evidence in regard to it. The assertion of each individual writer of Scripture, as to his own inspiration, is confirmed and strengthened by the assertions of his fellows, taught by God to see and declare the same fact. The numberless references and allusions from one part of Scripture to another, so extensively and intimately interwoven with the text, embodying, as they almost always do, a recognition of its divine and inspired character, form the testimony of many witnesses repeating ever and anon the testimony of the first as to his supernatural gifts; and all of them speaking from the same source of information, because all informed by God. In this way the evidences for the inspiration of Scripture are almost indefinitely multiplied and augmented; and the testimony of each individual writer to the inspiration of what he writes, is not to be taken and valued singly, but as one of many, and part of a whole.

The confirmation thus lent the one to the other, by the sacred penmen, is not like the allusions and references and quotations found in profane literature, when one author bears testimony to the historical veracity or literary standing of another. Such testimonies, even when founded on personal acquaintance with the author, and still more when derived only from a knowledge of his writings, can carry with them comparatively little weight in the way of establishing the trustworthiness of the writings. But when we find references and quotations and allusions in one Scripture author bearing upon the writings of another, and asserting or implying belief in their claims to divine authority and inspiration, the testimony borne, if we admit that it forms part of a revelation given by God, must be counted for His testimony; and therefore liable to no mistake, and carrying with it confirmation infallible of the claims.



Across long intervals of time, with many generations lying between,—with no personal knowledge of the authors or their qualifications,—with no source of information except that which is unseen and from above, one Scripture author may witness to others, and claim to be believed because speaking by instructions from God. It is thus that a man living in apostolic times, if himself endowed with revelation from heaven, may be a competent witness to the inspiration of records contemporaneous with the judges or monarchs of the Hebrew people; and that the New Testament generally, by its numberless quotations from and allusions to the Old, becomes an effective witness to the inspiration of the latter. Nothing is needed, except the admission by both parties in the argument, that a revelation from God is actually contained in the Bible, and preserved in its pages with the ordinary measure of historical purity common to credible and authentic histories, to warrant the argument that the testimony of any one or more of its authors to the divine authority and inspiration of a prior writer is conclusive of the question.

The unintentional errors which may be and are found in writings marked by perfect historical veracity, cannot be taken account of as affecting the force or conclusiveness of this argument. Making any allowance that can reasonably be demanded for the possibility of such errors, and subtracting from the sacred text what might by any chance be set to that account, there remains enough for the purpose which the friends of inspiration have in view. The multitude and variety of the testimony borne from one part of Scripture to another in support of its inspired authority, cannot in any degree be affected by such process of expurgation. Nothing short of the total denial of the historical veracity of Scripture as the record of a supernatural communication from God, could get rid of the evidence which the subsequent writers contribute by reference and quotation—involving directly or indirectly their own belief in the matter—to the inspiration of the preceding.

Of course the question whether or not, in any particular

instance, the quotation or allusion does imply a conviction or assertion of the inspiration of the writing quoted or referred to on the part of the sacred author who makes it, is one to be decided by those ordinary methods and laws of interpretation applicable to such matters in the instance of common authorship. But after judging of this point by principles available alike for profane and Scripture writers, if it shall be found that it is the belief and assertion of one of them living in subsequent ages that his predecessor was inspired in what he wrote a thousand years before, the argument is conclusive with all those who admit the two facts of the historical veracity of the Bible, and the divine revelation contained in it.

The same argument would not avail indeed in the instance of profane writers. The distance of time and country separating the two authors—the perhaps total want of knowledge of the one by the other, would make any such statement unworthy of grave consideration. But the gift of revelation in the case of the Scripture writer supplies the information that was needed, and qualifies him to declare the fact with complete knowledge of it, in spite of the remoteness in point of time or place, and notwithstanding his personal unacquaintedness with his predecessor. If Scripture be an authentic and credible record of a supernatural message from God, as both parties in the controversy about inspiration admit, there can be no difficulty at all in believing that one object of that message was to authenticate, by the means of subsequent prophets, the inspiration of the prophets that went before. Whether it can strictly be called an object of the revelation or not, the effect of it is the same.

The evidence, then, for inspiration in the case of any book or writing, begins with the witness of the writer himself, looking at him, in the first instance, as nothing more than an uninspired man, who is competent by complete knowledge and perfect veracity to testify to a fact, of which, if it be a fact, he must be cognizant, and, at the outset, no other can. The fact itself may as easily and completely be proved by human testimony as any other historical fact. The miracle

done upon the prophet by the power of God coming to him to open his eye to see the revelation, and to strengthen his hand to write it, must, to say the least of it, have been as much known to himself, as was the miracle done upon the man born blind to open his outward eye to see the sun, or upon the paralytic man to restore the withered arm to move. In both cases it was one of those ultimate facts which have their own evidence and certainty within them, and the belief of which can neither be explained nor questioned. And having himself this unquestionable knowledge and certainty of the fact, he could, if his own veracity be no less unquestionable, give the complete moral assurance of it to other men. Up to this point in the process, the fact of inspiration rests upon the same grounds of certainty as any other historical fact which we receive on the undoubted testimony of our fellow-men.

But, taking up a position in advance of this first one, it is admitted both by the friends and opponents of inspiration, that the book written by that man, and indeed the whole Scripture volume, contains, in a form of strictly historical veracity, a supernatural revelation from God. The repeated and broad assertions by the author himself of the fact of his inspiration by God, cannot be set down to the account of unintentional errors, such as might be consistent with perfect historical credibility. These assertions too much form a constituent part of the narrative, to be separated from it and got rid of in that way; and must therefore, unless the historical veracity of the writer is to be discredited, be accepted as part of the revelation which it is admitted he received from God. The fact of inspiration accepted before, upon the undoubted testimony of a man, apart from revelation by God, is now moved to a higher level, and seen to be a truth supernaturally communicated from on high. It becomes a fact of revelation; and as such, over and above the witness of man, it receives a witness greater.

That evidence may pass onward still, to ground yet more established by confirmatory evidence. A second man is in-

spired by God, in like manner as the first ; the supernatural gift has fallen upon another, and yet another, to whom revelations have been given, and who are all equally and infallibly instructed of God. The single testimony of the first witness to his own inspiration does not stand alone ; it is repeated and confirmed by many of his fellow-prophets, in every variety of form of allusion and reference and recognition, — they being inspired by God to see his inspiration and to attest it ; and so the fact does not now rest on the word of one, but of many, speaking with one voice to one truth. The evidence for the inspiration of Scripture derived from the witness of its writers, first in their assertions of their own prophetic gift, and next in the testimony borne in a thousand forms to each other, comes in this way to be indefinitely augmented.

Once more : many of these men claiming to be inspired by God stand out before the eyes of others as in daily communication with the Almighty, receiving, and exercising before all, His supernatural power of outward miracle ; and they go forth through the world confirming the inspired word, with signs following. Others of them who enjoy the higher gift of inspiration, have no signs of power to show for it ; but all of them are implicated and borne along in that flood of supernatural influences which followed the footsteps of God on the earth, from the first day that He entered upon His plan of redemption, until it reached its height in the manifestation of His Son,—the tide of inspiration and of miracle throughout all its course mingling in one. To every inspired word that was spoken, there was seen to run parallel and close at hand the work of miraculous power that publicly guaranteed it. They formed parts of one divine and indivisible system from first to last, bound by a supernatural band into a visible unity. The evidence of inspiration, beginning with the moral and not demonstrative evidence which human testimony is competent to furnish, is crowned and sealed in the end with the miraculous power of God.

If, then, the evidence for inspiration, when traced to its

source, is to be found in the statements of Scripture itself, in regard to its own divine and inspired character, it comes to be a question of importance, as regards our proper understanding of the extent and weight of the proof, to inquire into the manner in which it is presented to us in the sacred volume.

A very slight examination of Scripture shows that the evidence is restricted to no one special form, but is presented in a vast variety of ways. Inspiration, in this respect, is similar to other Scripture truths. We have no formal definition of the doctrine. It is not set forth in any series of insulated and didactic propositions. The assertion of it does not stand out alone from other doctrines, as if it had a place apart and unconnected with them. It is seen to pervade the whole of Scripture, rather than to occupy any separate portion devoted specially to the illustration and enforcement of it. It is much more by strong and unconscious implication that it is asserted by the sacred penmen, than by formal affirmations as to its nature, or polemical defences of its existence. In this treatment of the doctrine of inspiration, we witness only what we see in connection with other important doctrines of revelation which are seldom defined as articles of faith, or formally defended and set forth in distinct relief, except when some practical occasion demanded it, and always in connection with the present circumstances that constituted the demand.

Hence the Scripture evidence for inspiration comes to us in a great variety of forms. Sometimes we have direct and formal assertions by the writers of the Bible of their own inspiration. But much more often the fact is indirectly declared, being taken for granted as a point understood between the writer and the reader, in regard to which there was no dispute, and which is proved by being involved in every statement, and assumed in all the teaching.

For the most part, if not universally, the penmen of Scripture were clothed with a public and official character, sufficiently known to those for whom they wrote, and implying both a divine commission and an extraordinary inspiration. They



were prophets exercising the prophetic office in the sight of all Israel. They were men, like Moses, who had been in the mount with God. They were apostles, known throughout the churches by the signs of an apostle. They were teachers whose hands had healed the sick or raised the dead. The fact of the authorship of any writing, publicly known to belong to such men; the introduction of their name at the beginning or close, as in the salutations or subscriptions of many of the epistles; or any other indication of the quarter from which the composition came,—must, in such circumstances, have been itself a proof of divine authority, and required nothing more to recommend it, among those for whom it was written, as inspired.

Accordingly we do not find many formal assertions on the part of the Scripture writers of their own inspiration, but rather incidental and occasional notices of it when special circumstances required it. The prophets and apostles knew that they had a well-authenticated public character, as the extraordinary messengers of God in the estimation of those to whose hands their writings came. It would have been unnecessary, and positively incongruous, to have introduced into their writings the formal or frequent assertions of their own inspiration, when their public office or character told beforehand the fact. In all cases there was, in the writings themselves, or connected with their publication, sufficient indication of the divine source from which they emanated. When occasion demanded it, there was the more formal and articulate assertion of their inspired authority.

When, for instance, Paul would commend generally the sacred volume as profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in holiness, he introduces the recommendation by the general assertion, that it is all given by inspiration of God. When another apostle would confirm the faith of the believer in the prophetic announcements of Scripture, he adds, as the ground or warrant for the assurance, that holy men spake not of their own will, but as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. When his authority was challenged, and his word set at defiance by false teachers, Paul pressed upon

the Corinthians, as the test of their discipleship, the acknowledgment that what he wrote was the commandment of the Lord. There might occur emergencies or special circumstances demanding the very express and formal assertion of their inspiration in word and writings, and then we find the assertion actually made. But, in general, the fact of their inspiration was involved in the fact of their public and well-known character as ambassadors of God. The beliefs and traditions of the Church of God were of such a kind, that they did not require from Moses, when he became the historian of his people, any formal announcement to them of his divine authority; or from Paul, in his letters, any parade of the fact that he spoke in another name than his own: their accepted and accredited character went before them, and stood instead of any separate assertion of their inspiration. This of itself is sufficient to explain why the penmen of Scripture do not more frequently and dogmatically assert in so many terms their own inspiration.

The assertion was, in the vast majority of cases, not direct, but indirect,—a leaven that leavened all their teaching, and a fact that was taken for granted in every instance in which inspired men sought, by the declaration of doctrine to confirm the faith, or by the inculcation of duty to secure the obedience, of the Church of God. The fact of inspiration underlay every truth which they taught, as the ground on which they taught it as true. It was the support of every duty which they enjoined, as the spring of that authority that in duty claimed obedience. It was the secret of that strength which, itself oftentimes unspoken, gave power to the words of prophets when they spoke before kings. It was the mouth and wisdom that prevailed to overcome, when the fishermen of Galilee stood forth amid the infant Church to dictate its creed, to institute its laws, to rule the opinions and to bind the conscience of the early Christians. Without the acknowledgment of their inspiration as the writers and teachers of the primitive Church, the apostles could not have sustained towards it their office as apostles, or discharged its duties to the

disciples ; but with the universal acknowledgment of it on all hands among those to whom they wrote, the frequent or formal assertion of it was superfluous and unnatural, while we find it everywhere as the silent and unquestioned assumption which underlies all that they did or said.

The evidence, then, for inspiration is to be found in Scripture in the form, to a large extent, of indirect and incidental testimonies to its existence and effects ; but testimonies not the less conclusive, because, as it were, undesigned and informal. Of the two elements which belong to the inspired word, and make up its inspiration,—namely, *infallible truth* and *divine authority*,—the Scripture authors furnish us with complete proof in a thousand forms, apart from articulate or dogmatic assertions of them. By their speech and writings, and not less by their conduct and acts, without even express mention of the word, they give conclusive evidence of their own belief, and also of the universal belief of those with whom they had to do, in the supernatural inspiration of themselves and of the volume they wrote, as justly entitled to be regarded in its statements as both infallibly true and divinely authoritative.

When, for the purpose of establishing any point of doctrine which required to be taught to his disciples, we find a teacher in the last resort quoting the words of an ancient book, even in their minutest shades of meaning, as the sayings of God, and decisive for confirmation of the doctrine taught, there may be no express mention of inspiration ; but the practice, without such mention, is conclusive as to the opinions both of the teacher and his disciples as to the infallible truth of the document appealed to.

When, in the course of argument, and with a view to answer the objections of an opponent to the proposition he had announced, we find a reasoner putting these, his own words, when challenged, on a footing of equality with the divine, and silencing contradiction with the question, *Nay, but who art thou that repliest against God?* there may be no formal or dogmatic assertion of infallibility, but there is a silent and almost unconscious assumption of it on his part stronger still ;

and the acquiescence of those to whom he writes in the decision thus brought about, is equally proof of a corresponding conviction on their part.

When we find an office-bearer, not of the particular society, but at a distance from it, overruling the decisions of its own members, and while absent, yet judging as though he were present, and in the name of the Lord Jesus, and with His power, delivering one of them to Satan, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord, there may be no parade of supernatural authority as belonging to him; but nothing but the silent belief of it in his own mind can account for his conduct, and nothing except the similar belief in the minds of others can explain their submission to it.

When, everywhere, and among all persons, where personally known, and where unknown, on all occasions, and with respect to all matters, their words claimed a power to rule the belief of men, and to settle controversies of doctrine with no appeal from the decision, and assumed a right to enact and enforce laws for the government and conduct of men in societies, and as individuals, without any question,—and when such power and right were acknowledged and submitted to by all Christians, there being no challenge,—it exhibited a state of things which, better than any formal assertion, however strong, demonstrated a belief on both sides of the existence in the persons of these men, when speaking and acting officially, of both an infallible truth and a supernatural authority. There may be no word spoken about inspiration by either, when there is a silent assumption of it on the one part, and an equally silent concession of it on the other; but the assumption and concession may be manifested in such circumstances, and through the medium of such unequivocal though indirect evidence of speech and act, as to amount to a complete moral proof of the mutual conviction of both as to the fact.

The distinction which has all along been taken between a supernatural revelation and a supernatural inspiration as belonging to the sacred volume, does not come in here to

invalidate this kind of evidence ; as if the many references and appeals to Scripture as possessed of infallible truth and authority could be explained on the supposition that it contained a divine revelation, while the record was uninspired. Such an explanation, acknowledging the Bible to embody a revelation, but not to manifest an inspiration, might have been possible and sufficient, if the appeals and references had been of a general character, and limited to the substance or fundamental and prominent facts and doctrines of Scripture, and not going beyond. But nothing, except the inspiration of the record itself, in addition to the fact of a divine revelation contained in it, can explain or justify the appeal made to the minutest facts and doctrines, as well as to the more prominent, and to the very words in their nicest distinctions of meaning, as being equally authoritative and infallible with the substantial contents of it. Above all, the quotation and application of truths and facts in a sense admissible indeed from the nature of the language employed, but not in the mind of, or even understood by, the writers who employed it,—of which we find many examples in the references by the New Testament to the Old,—is a remarkable proof that, in the belief at least of the Scripture authors who make the appeal, the record which its human penmen wrote was controlled by a power above their own,—a power which, besides embodying in it a revelation from God, joined even the very form, in which it was embodied, to a superhuman truth.

The form in which a large and important portion of the evidence for inspiration is presented, is apt to lead many readers of Scripture to overlook the extent and undervalue the weight of it. In summing up the proof, men are tempted unconsciously to confine their attention to the more direct and formal assertions which the Bible writers make of their own supernatural inspiration. But in order to estimate aright the full evidence, we must take into account the indirect even more than the direct testimony ; and that we may interpret it in its proper meaning, we must go back and place ourselves side by side with the contemporaries of the



authors of the Scripture books, and enter into their spirit and views with the information that they actually possessed.

When judging of the inspiration of the Pentateuch, we must conceive of ourselves as standing in the midst of Israel when they received the books, in which he had written the words of God's law at God's command, from the hands of Moses himself ; or at least as contemporaries of Joshua, after he had added to the narrative of his master the account of his master's death, while the miracles of Egypt and the wilderness, of Sinai and Pisgah, were fresh in the memories of all, and the grave, sealed by no human hand, had hardly closed over the leader of Israel. In such circumstances it required no formal assertion on the part of Moses of his divine commission and inspiration, to satisfy the Israelites that the book which was written by that same hand which wrote upon the second tables of stone at Sinai, was infallibly true and divinely authoritative : any ostentatious assertion to that effect would have been felt to be unnecessary, if not incongruous.

Or when judging of the inspiration of Paul's letters to the different churches of the apostolic age, we must place ourselves in Corinth, within hearing of the miraculous utterances of tongues and revelations in the Christian Church, and in the midst of the prodigality of supernatural powers, which the laying on of Paul's own hands had conferred. Those who had received from these hands the two epistles, addressed to the Christians there, could not require to be formally assured of the public character, as an inspired and apostolic man, which Paul bore ; except perhaps it were the false teachers who had denied or challenged his authority, and for whose sake, therefore, he specially announced that what he wrote was "the commandments of the Lord." All others must have felt that the formal assertion of his inspiration was superfluous ; and must have been ready to interpret the very slightest and most indirect reference to it as evidence more than enough of the inspired character of the epistles. The knowledge of the official character, as supernatural agents of God, possessed by the writers of His word, went before them to introduce

their writings to the faith of their contemporaries, for whom they were intended; and the remembrance of the same fact, when judging now of the evidence for the inspiration of Scripture, will enable us to see, in the accidental and indirect proofs of it scattered over the pages they wrote, the oftentimes silent but conclusive testimony to the same fact.

The kind of evidence, then, to which we must appeal in establishing the inspiration of Scripture, is not the internal or experimental proof which avails to accredit the religious system contained in the Bible, but the testimony of the Bible itself as the primary and pertinent evidence for the fact. The argument is not to be fairly charged with a secret or silent begging of the question, as if we were attempting to prove inspiration by inspiration itself; for, in the first instance, the fact is made to rest on the ordinary ground of human testimony, emitted by men who perfectly knew the fact, and were true in declaring it. To those who, from whatever source, are convinced that the Bible contains a supernatural revelation,—and to both parties, therefore, in this debate as to inspiration, its opponents as well as friends,—the fact of inspiration, so largely asserted or assumed throughout, must appear to be one revealed by God, and therefore resting not only upon the witness of man, but also upon the word of God. The outward signs and wonders which confirmed the revelation in general, lend their support no less to the fact of inspiration as part of it; and that too in the case of inspired men not workers of miracles, as well as in the case of inspired men personally gifted with supernatural powers. The proof for the fact, as it is contained in Scripture, is presented in a great variety of shapes, often in the direct and formal assertions by its writers of their own inspiration, or that of their fellows; but oftener still in the indirect form of word and act, which implicitly declare and take for granted both the infallible truth and supreme authority of the sacred volume. The strength of the evidence can be estimated only by a detailed examination of it.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### PROOF OF INSPIRATION—OLD TESTAMENT.

IN entering on the consideration of the direct proof from Scripture of inspiration, there are two preliminary points to be kept in view.

*First*, It is important to remember the precise stage in the discussion at which we have arrived, and our proper point of departure in proceeding to deal with the evidence. The preliminary truths formerly adverted to as admitted on both sides of the controversy about inspiration here come prominently into view, and serve in no small degree to narrow the field of argument. The discussion must be held as starting from the admission, that the Bible contains a supernatural communication from God, coming to us in a form historically true; and all that is properly involved in this admission must be regarded as argument available for the use of the friends of inspiration, while all that is inconsistent with it must be accounted as already set aside as irrelevant and excluded from the debate. The extent to which such an admission bears upon the evidence applicable to the point to be established, is at once apparent.

In proceeding to interpret and apply the language of Scripture to the proof of inspiration, we are entitled and bound to deal with it on the idea that the supernatural must be expected to be involved in its statements, and that the interpretation is to proceed in conformity with such an admission. It is not only that we must admit that the supernatural element is implied in the facts both of revelation and inspiration, but also, and especially, that in any method of

interpreting Scripture statements, so as to estimate the proof they furnish for inspiration, we must be prepared to meet with the supernatural at every hand, and no extent to which it is met with can be an argument against the interpretation.

In this respect the interpretation of Scripture language and of the language of every other book is different. In interpreting the statements of any profane history, when we meet with the account of supernatural events mixed up with natural, we must proceed upon the plan of separating between the two in our interpretation of the passage, and endeavouring to reject the one while retaining what is possible or probable of the other. But if our admission that the Bible contains a supernatural revelation from God of His own supernatural acts in the plan of grace is not to be nullified or contradicted, our method of interpreting the language of Scripture will be wholly different. No occurrence of the supernatural element, however frequent or extensive, in the statements of Scripture, can justify some non-natural mode of interpretation by which it might possibly be set aside; or indeed any interpretation other than what would have been adopted had there been no supernatural element in the statements at all. To interpret the Bible on any other principle, amounts to a rejection or denial of its veracity altogether, and involves the assumption that it is not supernatural.

A great deal of the difficulty, felt or alleged, in connection with the Scripture evidence for inspiration, proceeds from the refusal to interpret its statements in any sense that involves the supernatural; or at least, from the adoption of methods of explaining these statements, that may make them consistent with the restriction of it within the narrowest possible limits. The utterance of predictions of the future, of the meaning and application of which the speaker himself is entirely ignorant at the time, necessarily implies an inspiration in the utterance plenary and divine; and the recognition of such prophecies, and the reference to the fulfilment of them in ages long after by our Lord Himself, or by any of the later Scripture writers, is complete evidence that they believed

and asserted the fact of such inspiration. But if men sit down to interpret these statements of Scripture with the foregone conclusion, that all predictive prophecy is impossible, or even with the predisposition to restrict it within the limits of merely exceptional cases, it is plain that injustice of the worst kind is done to the evidence they furnish for inspiration.

The historical details of the long line of typical events and persons, which found their exact fulfilments, ages after, in Christ and Christianity, could not have been written by any historian except under the direction of a wisdom not his own; and the almost countless references to these fulfilments, scattered up and down through the pages of the New Testament authors, amount to a convincing proof that they at least believed in both a divine arrangement fashioning the type at first, and a divine inspiration recording it in the history. But if men are determined to exclude typical prediction from the page of Scripture as a thing not to be credited, or at least are resolved, from jealousy of the supernatural in such a form, to explain it away in every case in which it is possible to do so by some strained interpretation of the language, it can be no matter for wonder if they refuse to acknowledge many of the strongest proofs which can be offered of the plenary inspiration of the Bible.

Once more: the double meanings of many passages of Scripture which contain a sense additional to and remote from the sense the authors themselves saw in it, if they are to be admitted as real, necessarily imply an authorship, so to speak, double also, binding into one statement the divine idea and the human; and the acknowledgment of these by the New Testament writers, and more especially the use to which they are put for the confirmation of doctrine or the enforcement of duty, very strongly demonstrates the conviction entertained by them of an infallible inspiration. But if, under the influence of some theory which denies the double sense of Scripture, all these testimonies are to be explained away, the evidence for inspiration is got rid of by the same process. The frank acknowledgment generally of the supernatural



character of the revelation which the Bible contains, and, as a consequence, the acknowledgment in particular, that by His control over men and events, and the record of these in His own word, God can in the sacred volume speak through prophecy and type with meanings deeper than its authors knew, would open up an effectual way for a better estimate of the evidence for inspiration.

In the same manner, a more ready and adequate admission of the historical veracity of the Scripture penmen, as a point to be taken for granted between the friends and opponents of plenary inspiration, would largely contribute to the same result. The Bible, differing from other books in the fact of the supernatural character which belongs to it, must be dealt with according to a corresponding difference in the method of interpretation applicable to it. But, agreeing with other books in the character of historical veracity that is to be attributed to the record, it ought to have conceded to it, even by those who deny its inspiration, not less than the same measure of deference that is willingly allowed to any other authentic and credible narrative, when interpreting its statements.

In multitudes of cases, however, it will be found that this concession is not made. The morbid aversion to acknowledge the presence of anything, not to be explained on natural principles, in the sacred volume, has frequently led to the denial, in connection with it, of that justice in the interpretation of its language which would not be denied to any other volume admitted to be historically true. The liberty that is often taken with the statements of the sacred penmen, is one that would not be taken with the language of profane historians, whose veracity is not called in question; and in proportion to the licence used, is the injustice done to the testimony they bear to their own inspiration. It would go very far to clear the way for a more accurate estimate of the evidence for inspiration, if the two facts of the supernatural character and the historical veracity of the Bible, with all that is rightfully implied in these two facts, were constantly recognised in dealing with the proof.

But there is a *second* preliminary point to be borne in mind in connection with the evidence. Inspiration, as has been repeatedly remarked, is a fact which is made up of, and marked by, the presence of these two elements in the Scripture volume, namely, infallible truth and divine authority; and the proof that establishes the reality of these two, is the proof that establishes inspiration. Whatever evidence demonstrates the infallible truth and divine authority of the statements made by the Scripture writers, demonstrates their inspiration by God, even although there should be no express mention made, in the passages adduced as evidence, of that supernatural and secret agency of the Holy Spirit in the prophets which we call inspiration, or any reference to the miraculous process by which they were inspired. It is enough if, apart from the cause or the means of inspiration, we can by Scripture statements establish the twofold effect of it, in the infallible truth and divine authority of what is inspired. These two elements must, directly or indirectly, be involved in all that is inspired by God.

Still, although they cannot, properly speaking, be disjoined in any inspired record, yet the one may be more prominent or apparent than the other; and the evidence of the one may be more conspicuous than that of the other in particular cases of inspiration. When, for example, there is doctrine to be taught, it may be the infallible truth of God, given to it by inspiration, that is more prominently and conspicuously made manifest in recommending it to our belief; while the divine authority, with which it is taught, may be implied rather than expressed. Or when it is a duty that is to be inculcated for the obedience of men, it may be the divine authority with which, in consequence of inspiration, it is made binding on the conscience, that is more distinctly or pointedly brought out; while the infallible truth is silently taken for granted rather than ostensibly announced.

But whether the prominence is given to the one or to the other, the evidence leads to the same result in either case. On some occasions the proof may more conspicuously demonstrate

the infallible truth than the supreme authority of what is inspired, and on other occasions it may be the reverse; but in no instance can the two be separated, and the testimony that certifies for the one must be held as no less strongly accrediting the other. Nothing can be a truth given by inspiration of God which does not carry with it His authority to bind the understanding and the conscience to submit to it; and nothing, on the other hand, can by inspiration be clothed with His authority to demand the belief or obedience of men, which is not at the same time characterized by His infallible truth. Inspiration, therefore, may be demonstrated to be a fact, by proof which establishes either one or the other separately, since the one necessarily infers the other. There are many Scripture statements that can be adduced in proof of inspiration, which directly establish the infallible truth of what is inspired, while they only indirectly establish the divine authority; and, conversely, there are others which expressly assert the divine authority of some commandment of the Lord, and leave to be inferred the infallible truth of the duty or obligation. It will be more easy to estimate the full value of the evidence for inspiration, if the different forms in which it is expressed are thus understood.

The proof of the inspiration of the Old Testament may, for the sake of convenience, be dealt with before that of the New. The two, indeed, are very much to be estimated in conjunction, and cannot be rightly understood unless viewed together. They constitute, to so large an extent, parts of one argument, that injustice is done to the apologetic value of the evidence if entirely separated. Although, therefore, for the benefit of the order and distinctness of the discussion, and because the argument must be handled somewhat differently in the two cases, it may be practically more convenient to dispose of the inspiration of the Old Testament, before entering upon the same question in reference to the New, yet the general result and effect of the evidence can be appreciated only by a conjunct view of both.

I. If we trace back the history of inspiration in so far as

it is made known in Scripture, we shall find indications of the existence from the very beginning of a class of men, more or less, distinguished from others by special intercourse with God, and by the formal recognition of them as His agents, to speak and act among their fellows in a supernatural manner for Him. The development and progress of the divine plan of redemption gradually shaped these into a separate prophetic order, to whom, and not to others, God conveyed His supernatural messages of mercy or judgment to this world; and who were the recognised and public medium through which His word was spoken to their fellow-men as often as it was miraculously revealed.

The communications made to these men, to be declared to their fellows, were not confined to prophecies of the future, but comprehended also messages from God, and announcements of His mind and will with respect to the present: their words were enlarged, to speak declarative as well as predictive prophecy. Neither was the supernatural agency of the Spirit restricted to revelations and prophesyings. It sometimes conferred extraordinary gifts of a kind fitting the persons who received them to act for God, as well as to speak for Him, and to stand forth in the sight of others as the extraordinary agents of the Most High, endowed in a supernatural manner to do His work; whether it was workmanship in all manner of cunning work for His sanctuary, or the government and deliverance of His people. But whatever was the diversity of gifts conferred by the supernatural power of the Spirit, they were held and employed not at their own will, or for their own purposes, but as a trust from God, to be used only for His ends. The parties to whom they were entrusted stood forth in the estimation of their fellow-men, and distinguished from others, as the spokesmen or instruments of God.

But, limiting our consideration to the case of those in whom the supernatural presence of the Spirit of God was manifested by revelations and inspiration, it is possible to trace an almost uninterrupted succession of these from the beginning.

The remarkable prophecy which Jude ascribes to Enoch, points him out as following closely in succession to the first father of the human family, as one who had received promises and revelations from God; and who was enabled, in the midst of prevailing ungodliness, not only by the ordinary influences of the Spirit to rest his own faith on the woman's Seed who was to come, but also by miraculous inspiration to tell to his generation of the second coming of Christ unto judgment. The second father of our race, in near proximity to Enoch, is expressly represented as a preacher of righteousness, moved by the Spirit while yet there was no written revelation, to hand down the promises of the coming salvation, and the warnings of God against sin, from the ancient world that perished, all but himself, amid the waters, to the new world, in whose favour the promises were supernaturally renewed. The same promises, enlarged and repeated in the line of Abraham, and of the heirs of the covenant descending from him, still kept up the succession of men to whom revelations and inspiration were in a supernatural manner vouchsafed; and even beyond that line, we have once and again examples, such as that of Melchizedek, of persons, insulated and apart from the ordinary succession of prophets, on whom the miraculous inspiration of the Spirit had descended. All these are to be noted as inspired speakers for God at a time when there was no written revelation, and when the promises of God's mercy were entrusted to the keeping of tradition, and to the teaching of oral prophecy. But they were all men who bore a public and well-recognised character, as parties on whom the Spirit of prophecy had been poured out, and who in their official teaching were marked out and distinguished from others by divine warrant as authorized to speak for the Most High.

The introduction of written in place of oral revelation was especially marked as the date of the fuller and more prominent development of the prophetic order.

The commandment given to Moses by God Himself, '*Write thou these words,*' was the turning-point of a system in which



supernatural revelations were no longer to be entrusted to memory and to oral prophecy, but were henceforward to be committed to a surer and more permanent record ; and when the prophetic order were to occupy a higher and more important position. Along with a written revelation there were laid the foundations of a visible Church, to be formally distinguished from the world, and set apart by positive institutions for the service of God. Religion itself was no longer to be confined in its doctrines to the few promises given to Adam and Noah and the Patriarchs, and handed down as the articles of a creed that could be compendiously recited by one to another ; nor in its institutions to the ordinance of the Sabbath and sacrifice, which had existed from the beginning, or to circumcision added to Abraham and his seed. The scanty Bible and ritual of the early ages of the world were to be exchanged for a religion greatly enlarged in respect of the truths which it embraced, and still more enlarged in respect of the rites and ordinances of divine service which it required from the worshippers of God in His visible Church. Corresponding with this development, and rendered necessary by it, we find the revelation of God no longer narrowed within the bounds of memory and tradition, but extended in the prophet's roll ; and preserved in the form of a written and permanent record that could be read year after year in the audience of the people. The history of God's dealings with His Church, and the progressive working out of His plans of grace, as these were developed more and more in verbal revelation and typical ordinance, constituted that manifestation of the divine character and mind which was to instruct men in spiritual things, and required to be put upon record in a form that admitted of it being referred to, and studied day by day with renewed and prolonged consideration. From the commencement of a visible Church, and a written revelation entrusted to its custody, the prophetic order was exalted to a higher standing as an established institution in connection with it.

The first man commissioned and endowed by God to write in a book the words of the law stood at the very head of

the prophetic order as the chosen example of the office, and selected to be the type of the divine Prophet who was to come. Distinguished by a measure of communion with God which has been given to none other, and the agent of the Most High for miraculous wonders of the most stupendous kind, Moses ushered in a series of prophetic men whose double work it was first supernaturally to receive the revelations of God as they were given, and next to put them on record in a written form for the perusal and study of the Church at the time, and for the generations afterwards. Following out the commandment to embody the word of God in a permanent form, he gave instructions for the safe preservation of it beside the ark, and the public reading of it to the people; and the charge which he thus took in connection with the written revelation of God, was a duty which he bequeathed to his successors in the prophetic office as peculiarly attaching to them.

With respect to Joshua, his immediate successor, we are told that 'he wrote these words in the book of the law of God,'<sup>1</sup> as if it had been part of his peculiar functions. With respect to Samuel as a prophet, we are informed that he 'told the people the manner of the kingdom, and wrote it in a book, and laid it up before the Lord.'<sup>2</sup> Similar intimations of the works of the prophet, in connection with the recording and preserving of the divine revelations, occur in after ages. In the case of Isaiah, the Lord gave him the commandment, 'Take thee a great roll, and write in it with a man's pen ;'<sup>3</sup> and on another occasion, 'Write it before them in a table, and note it in a book, that it may be for the time to come for ever and ever.'<sup>4</sup> In the instance of Jeremiah we find it recorded, This word came unto Jeremiah from the Lord, saying, 'Take thee a roll of a book, and write therein all the words that I have spoken unto thee ;'<sup>5</sup> and on another occasion, 'Thus speaketh the Lord God of Israel, saying, Write thee all the words that I have spoken unto thee in a book.'<sup>6</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> Josh. xxiv. 26.

<sup>2</sup> 1 Sam. x. 25.

<sup>3</sup> Isa. viii. 1.

<sup>4</sup> Isa. xxx. 8.

<sup>5</sup> Jer. xxxvi. 1.

<sup>6</sup> Jer. xxx. 2.

writings thus made and preserved by the successive prophets are specially referred to by Daniel as the source from which he derived his knowledge of the approaching termination of the captivity of his countrymen: 'I Daniel understood by books the number of the years whereof the word of the Lord came to Jeremiah the prophet, that He would accomplish seventy years in the desolations of Jerusalem.'<sup>1</sup>

As compared with their task before, the duty of the prophets after the introduction of a written revelation was somewhat different and more onerous. They had not only to speak for God the communications conveyed to them by His hands, but also to embody them in a permanent form as they were successively given, gradually filling up the record of the written revelation, as one roll was added to another, while preserving all from mixture or addition of error under the guardianship and seal of their prophetic office. Their recognised character as prophets both to speak and write for God, and the distinction to be maintained between them and other men as divinely accredited for the purpose, is strongly brought out by the test embodied in the Mosaic law for discriminating between the true prophet and the false, and by the punishment to be awarded to the latter for pretending to an office not given him by God.

The immemorial existence of such an office in the Church of God, in connection with all the revelations ever vouchsafed to this world; the more peculiar prominence and importance attached to it from the first date of a written revelation; and the distinguishing duty belonging to the prophets to speak and to write in the name of God the words supernaturally given them for the purpose, bestowed both upon themselves and upon their writings a publicly recognised character, which could not be counterfeited or mistaken. The written prophecy,—using the word in its widest sense, as the announcement of the mind of God, and not merely the announcement of the future unknown to man,—which came from their hand needed no other witness than simply

<sup>1</sup> Dan. ix. 2.

evidence that it did so come, to convince the Church of God that it was both a revelation and an inspiration in the proper meaning of the terms. The prophets themselves were marked out by special warrant of God as officially His agents to minister His revelations and messages to this earth; they were men into whose mouths He put the words He wished to be heard by the world; and these words, spoken or written, were guaranteed by the Source from which they came, and without further testimony or assertion, as inspired by God.

The peculiar relation in which Aaron is represented as standing to Moses, declares with perfect accuracy the relation of the prophet to God. To overcome the reluctance of Moses to carry the divine message to Israel and to Pharaoh, and to obviate the objection that he was naturally slow of speech, and of a slow tongue, God reminded him that Aaron could speak well, and then adds, 'Thou shalt speak unto him, and put words in his month: he shall be thy spokesman unto the people; and he shall be, even he shall be to thee instead of a mouth, and thou shalt be to him instead of God.'<sup>1</sup> 'See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh; and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet.'<sup>2</sup>

As the public mouthpiece of God, speaking officially His revelation, the oral or written prophecy of the prophet required no other guarantee that it was supernaturally inspired. The books of the Old Testament, coming from men belonging to the prophetic order and office, needed no other proof than that of their origin to be accepted as the supernatural inspiration of God. Even when there may be, in some particular instance, no mention in the book itself of its inspiration, and no formal assertion on the subject, its place in the prophetic roll, once established, is sufficient evidence. If there was no mistake as to the supernatural source from which it came, there could be no mistake as to its supernatural character. The Israelites did not need, day by day, as Moses recited to them, with intervals of time between, portion after portion of the commandments of the Lord, that they should be assured afresh that

<sup>1</sup> Ex. iv. 14-16.

<sup>2</sup> Ex. vii. 1.

each new one, as it was uttered, was a revelation from the mount. They knew that he had been alone with God there, and that every word which in his official character he spoke, came from supernatural inspiration. And so, in like manner, the prophetic order, once known to have been made 'a mouth' unto God for the purpose of speaking His revelations to men, they required nothing but evidence that any particular writing came officially from the prophets who belonged to it, to be satisfied that it was inspired of God. Such evidence was open to the contemporaries of the Old Testament writers, to be judged of in each case according to its merits; and the unanimous reception by the ancient Church of the various books now constituting the older canon, as the writings of prophetic men, is guarantee that the evidence was sufficient.

The divine sanction, then, which was given to the prophetic order generally, and the public seal of God upon the prophets as spokesmen for Him, require only to be supplemented by evidence that each book of the Old Testament really emanated from one or other of them, in order to furnish complete evidence of their supernatural inspiration. In other words, the ordinary proof which establishes the claim of any of the Old Testament writings to belong to the canon, carries with it proof also that it is inspired, apart from any special pretensions to inspiration which it may put forth in its own favour, or from testimony to the like effect by other parties.

II. But generally there is abundant evidence in the Old Testament books themselves of the claims that they make to be regarded as in their proper character divinely inspired, and of the supernatural presence, with the writers, of the Spirit that moves them to speak.

There are a few books of the ancient canon indeed, in which is to be found no direct mention of their supernatural pretensions, just in the same way as there were portions of the commandments and ordinances uttered by Moses, that did not contain in themselves, or on the face of them, any assertion



or evidence that they were commandments of God. In the same way as these commandments were known to be divine by the supernatural source from which they came, as, all of them, utterances of an inspired man that had a public commission from God for the purpose, so the books that make no express assertion themselves of their own inspiration, are proved to possess it from the prophetic source from which they emanated, as being equally with others the writings of men set apart by God to speak for Him. But generally we find in the language of the Old Testament one uniform assertion of the divine authority with which the authors write.

The special affirmations of their own inspiration by the Old Testament writers are very numerous; and no reason can be given for limiting them to the occasions or statements in connection with which they occur, and not extending their application to all the truths or facts which the writer has recorded.

Thus the opening commission given by God to Moses, can with no show of reason be restricted to the particular occasion on which it was given, but must plainly apply to all that he officially said or did as God's servant, 'I will be thy mouth, and teach thee what thou shalt say.' In like manner, we have a general statement equally applicable to all he ever wrote, in the last words of David, the anointed of the God of Jacob and the sweet Psalmist of Israel, 'The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue.' The announcement by Isaiah, at the commencement of his prophecies, of the supernatural authority with which he spake, can by no possibility be interpreted exclusively of what he prophesied at any one time afterwards, and not at others: 'Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth; for the Lord hath spoken.' In the same way, the similar declaration by Jeremiah at the outset of his predictions, is a general one, embracing them all; and indeed often and again repeated by him subsequently: 'Then the word of the Lord came unto me, saying.' To a similar effect, the inauguration by divine authority of Ezekiel's prophecies is entirely general, admitting

of no limited application: 'The word of the Lord came expressly unto Ezekiel the priest, the son of Buzi, in the land of the Chaldeans, by the river Chebar; and the hand of the Lord was there upon him.' With a like extent of application must we regard the very many assertions of a similar kind, scattered up and down the writings of the Old Testament prophets, and witnessing to their inspiration.

The form of language, indeed, is so varied and yet so general,—especially when interpreted in the light of the official and well-recognised character which the writers bore as prophets or spokesmen for God,—that the evidence which it furnishes cannot be limited to any special occasion of their speaking or writing, but must be held as covering them all. Thus the commonly used language in reference to their own statements is, 'The mouth of the Lord hath spoken;' 'Thus saith the Lord;' 'Hear the word of the Lord.' And in numberless cases in the Old Testament prophets we find such expressions as these, 'The word that Isaiah the son of Amos saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem;' 'The word that came to Jeremiah from the Lord, saying;' 'The word of the Lord came expressly to Ezekiel;' 'The beginning of the word of the Lord by Hosea;' 'Now the word of the Lord came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying;' 'The word of the Lord that came unto Micah;' 'The book of the vision of Nahum;' 'The burden which Habakkuk the prophet did see;' 'The word of the Lord which came unto Zephaniah;' 'In the first day of the month came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet;' 'In the eighth month came the word of the Lord unto Zechariah;' 'The burden of the word of the Lord to Israel by Malachi.'

Such forms of language can only be interpreted in reference to that supernatural inspiration under which prophets spake the word that God put into their mouths, and apply to all that they wrote in their official character, as men commissioned to record the revelations given to them. It would be difficult, upon any sound principles of reason or interpretation, to exclude any portion of their writings from the

application of these assertions, if such portion really belongs to the Old Testament canon, that is to say, if it was written by the men who were publicly commissioned and endowed by God to speak and write on His behalf; and hence, on the presupposition of both the supernatural character and historical veracity of Scripture, the evidence for its inspiration must be held to be complete.

III. But equally decisive with the direct assertions of its own inspiration which abound in the Old Testament volume, are to be accounted the quotations from and allusions to it contained in the New. These afford an evidence for the inspiration of the Old Testament entirely conclusive, and that appears the more so the more minutely they are examined. They embrace the testimony of our Lord Himself to the divine inspiration of His Father's written word in such a shape as to stamp it with the seal of His infallible authority. But they comprehend also the testimony of the New Testament writers, which, if they are to be accounted the true recorders of a true revelation from God, must equally avail to establish the fact to which they bear such distinct and unequivocal witness.

It is impossible, without dealing at length with the evidence, to understand its full amount. It especially requires to be followed out in its minute applications, in order that its force may be apprehended. A few specimens only can be given. They will be taken first from one of the Gospels, and then from one of the Epistles; and can be regarded only as examples of a kind of evidence for the inspiration of the Old Testament which extensively pervades the New, and which, to be rightly valued, must be examined in detail. We shall give the passages from the Old Testament, and then the citation or reference found in the New, following, in the first place, the order of Matthew's Gospel.<sup>1</sup>

1. 'Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel' (Isa. vii. 14).

<sup>1</sup> Birks: Bible and Modern Thought, pp. 205, etc.

‘But while he (Joseph) thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a Son, and thou shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a Son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which, being interpreted, is, God with us’ (Matt. i. 20, etc.).

The quotation in this passage by the evangelist from Isaiah is itself sufficient proof that Matthew believed in the supernatural inspiration of the prophet. But the purpose for which the quotation is made is especially to be marked as decisive on this point. The two fundamental truths of the miraculous conception and the supreme divinity of our Lord are proved, or confirmed as true, by an appeal to the fulfilment of an ancient prediction, not only in its general meaning, but in its minute expressions, and even separate words. The history of the Son of God made flesh and born into this world, is inaugurated and sealed by the evidence of prophecy; and the manner of His human birth, as well as the truth of His divine nature, are spoken of as facts occurring in order ‘that it might be fulfilled’ what was spoken by the prophet. The supernatural agency of God in the inspiration of Isaiah in his prediction, and the minute and exact verification of the prophet’s words, are bound up with the providence of the same God in the birth of His Son, as parts of the same divine working, and equally certain or necessary, by the remarkable language here for the first time used, but so often afterwards repeated, ‘*that it might be fulfilled.*’

2. ‘But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall He come forth unto Me that is to be ruler in Israel’ (Mic. v. 2).

‘And they (the chief priests and scribes) said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judea: for thus it is written by the prophet,

And thou, Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule My people Israel' (Matt. ii. 5).

The fulfilment of the prediction of Micah, referred to by the priests and scribes, seems to be one sanctioned by the evangelist who reports it; and, if so, furnishes another example of the manner in which the plenary inspiration of the Old Testament writers and the certainty of their words, are inseparably connected with the fundamental arrangements of the divine plan in the advent of the Son of God. His entrance on human life, and the remarkable arrangements of His Father's providence, whereby His birth at Bethlehem, and not at Nazareth, contrary to human probability, was secured, were events that fell in with the infallible truth and certainty of words spoken five hundred years before,—events that were arranged to be as they were, and in no other way, just in order that the divine truth and unchangeable certainty of these words might not be interfered with. No theory of inspiration short of a plenary one will satisfy the requirements of a system of prophecy whose fulfilments, down to their minutest letter, are secured by the divine ordinations carried out in the life of Christ, expressly in subserviency to their fulfilment.

3. 'When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called My son out of Egypt' (Hosea xi. 1).

'When he (Joseph) arose, he took the young child and His mother by night, and departed into Egypt; and was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called My Son' (Matt. ii. 14, 15).

The prophecy of Hosea, and its fulfilment in the exile of the infant Saviour in Egypt, and His return, furnish an instance of those typical predictions which the opponents of inspiration have often strongly objected to as impossible and incredible. Yet to those who frankly concede the possibility of the supernatural in the working of God towards the accomplishment of the salvation of men, there can be no



difficulty at all in conceiving that the Most High may so control and shape the order of events under His providence, as to make them representative of other events to occur long afterwards; and so types finding their fulfilments in the future Antitype. And to those who admit the actual historical veracity of the Scripture record, there can remain, after that, no difficulty in believing that the exile of Israel, and their deliverance from Egypt in ancient times, were types of what happened to the Saviour Himself in His early years; so that the language of Hosea found its proper and true fulfilment in the event which the evangelist has recorded. But if this be so, the language of the prophet furnishes an instance of prophecy that must have been unintelligible to the party who uttered it; and which, therefore, if uttered at all, must have been so under supernatural agency that embodied in it a meaning beyond the prophet's own. The declaration by Matthew, that Egypt received and delivered up the infant Christ, *that* it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Hosea long before, forbids the idea of a lucky and accidental coincidence, and makes his words to furnish one of the strongest testimonies that could be given to the inspiration of the Old Testament writings.

4. 'Thus saith the Lord, A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rachel weeping for her children, and refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not' (Jer. xxxi. 15).

'Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not' (Matt. ii. 17, 18).

Like the preceding example, the fulfilment of Jeremiah's prophecy, mentioned by the evangelist, is an instance of typical prediction in which the desolation and mourning caused in Israel by the Babylonish captivity, are held to be representative of the bereavement and sorrow in Bethlehem in consequence of the massacre of its children. The impos-

sibility of the one event being made, of purpose, typical of the other, can only be asserted by those who are prepared to repudiate the superintending providence and divine foresight of God in reference to all events; while the denial of the fulfilment of the type in the actual mourning for the infants, can only be maintained by the denial of the historical veracity of Matthew, and of the supernatural revelation given to him in the matter. If neither of these positions is taken up, it is impossible to interpret the language by any principle of accommodation, or to refuse to recognise in it a positive assertion on his part of the existence of a supernatural inspiration in the Old Testament prophet that guided him to the use of language, the meaning of which must have been unknown to him.

5. 'The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: and the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together' (Isa. xl. 3, etc.).

'For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make His paths straight' (Matt. iii. 3. See also Mark i. 2; Luke iii. 4; John i. 2).

In connection with the same event we have the prophecy of Malachi, and the reference to it in the Gospel narrative.

'Behold, I will send My messenger, and he shall prepare the way before Me' (Mal. iii. 1).

'For this is he of whom it is written, Behold, I send My messenger before Thy face, which shall prepare Thy way before Thee' (Matt. xi. 10. See also Mark i. 2; Luke vii. 27).

The references in these passages to the prophets Isaiah and Malachi, constitute an unmistakeable acknowledgment, in the one case by the evangelist, in the other case by our Lord, of the supernatural inspiration of the writings referred

to, not in the general sense or substance only, but in their minute details of expression, as being sufficient to confirm the truth of John's history. The certainty of the events recorded of our Lord's forerunner, is made in some sense to depend on the certainty and infallibility of the earlier statements of Scripture in regard to him.

6. 'That He might make thee know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the Lord doth man live' (Deut. viii. 3).

'For He shall give His angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone' (Ps. xci. 11, 12).

'Ye shall not tempt the Lord your God, as ye tempted Him in Massah' (Deut. vi. 16).

'Thou shalt fear the Lord thy God, and serve Him' (Deut. vi. 13).

'But He (Jesus) answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God' (Matt. iv. 4. See also Luke iv. 4).

'And (the devil) saith unto Him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down : for it is written, He shall give His angels charge concerning thee ; and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone' (Matt. iv. 6).

'Jesus saith unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God' (Matt. iv. 7. See also Luke iv. 12).

'Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan ; for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and Him only shalt thou serve' (Matt. iv. 12. See also Luke iv. 8).

Not the least impressive of the lessons taught by the temptation of the Son of God, is the lesson of the authority that belongs to the written word of God, to which, in His replies to the tempter, He constantly appealed as conclusive in regard to the temptation presented to Him. The Saviour might of His own authority have announced the truths with

which He stopped the mouth of the tempter; or He might have declared and confirmed His answers from their own intrinsic evidence or inherent truth. But, as if it were a higher authority than His own divine assertions, He borrows the authority of the written Scripture to silence the accuser; and in order to give to them a truth which their own inherent evidence did not give, He puts His affirmations in the shape of quotations from that word which human pens, guided by God, had recorded. Nothing, by possibility, could have shown the honour that He put upon the inspiration of the word in a clearer or more impressive light. Not only by His own personal submission to it, as clothed by inspiration with the authority of Him to whose word as a Son he was subject, but also by His reference to it, and to it alone, as supreme, and beyond appeal, in the controversy between Himself and Satan, He has put His seal to it as both infallibly true and divinely binding in every jot and tittle of it. One word of the inspired Bible, although not spoken by God personally, but only spoken by His servant Moses on God's behalf, was stronger than all the temptations with which He was assailed; and the appeal thrice made by our Saviour's lips demonstrated that the Scripture could not be broken. Even the quotation by the tempter himself, though misapplied and perverted, is a remarkable testimony to the inspiration of Scripture; as if some pretext at least of countenance from that infallible word were necessary before he could venture to approach the Son of God.

7. 'Nevertheless, the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first He lightly afflicted the land of Zebulun, and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the nations. The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined' (Isa. ix. 1, 2).

'He (Jesus) departed into Galilee, and leaving Nazareth, He came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea-

coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; the people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up' (Matt iv. 12–16).

In the narrative of Matthew, we find not only a reference made to the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, but, what is the chief point of interest in contemplating it, the mention of it as the reason that ruled our Saviour's conduct in selecting Galilee as the great scene of His public life and ministry. In the previous history of our Lord's earthly life, we gather that the remarkable arrangements of Providence which determined His birth-place to be at Bethlehem, were shaped and ordered with a view to the fulfilment of Micah's prediction. In the present mention by the evangelist of our Lord's change of residence from Nazareth to Capernaum, when He entered upon the public ministry of His life, we find that it was carried out from the motive of fulfilling to its letter the inspired word which had indicated beforehand the scenes of His preaching. The necessity of proving by His conduct the infallibility of His Father's inspired word, was thus seen to determine the course of His after life.

8. 'This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing; he shall be brought unto the priest,' etc. (Lev. xiv. 24, etc.).

'Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, show thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them' (Matt. viii. 4. See also Mark i. 44; Luke v. 14).

The commandment to the leper by our Lord cannot be accounted for on any theory of His accommodating Himself to the customs or traditions of the Jewish people; for He invariably set Himself against such, when unwarranted by the divine law. It can be explained only on the principle that our Lord recognised the Mosaic law as the law of God,



and still binding in such cases. The reference to the minute details of its ceremonial services, as laid down in Leviticus, carried with it evidence that He accepted the record there given as divine, and bearing with it divine authority over the conscience and practice.

9. 'Surely He hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows' (Isa. liii. 4).

'He cast out the spirits with His word, and healed all that were sick: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses' (Matt. viii. 16, 17).

The allusion in this passage of the evangelist to Isaiah affords very striking evidence of the plenary inspiration of the ancient Scriptures. There is an extension of meaning given to the language of the prophet, which, however much admissible by the language itself, and actually in the view of the Spirit who inspired it, could not have been in the mind of the writer, or indeed at all discoverable by him. If the interpretation put upon the prediction by Matthew be correct,—and to deny this amounts to a denial that he was instructed by revelation of God,—it affords a most impressive proof of the supernatural inspiration which presided over the very language in which the prediction was uttered, and which, unknown to the prophet, expressed a wisdom which was not his. Isaiah could have known but imperfectly the great doctrine of substitution, by which the Son of God, standing in the place of the sinner, actually took upon Himself the sinner's guilt, and so bore our griefs and carried our sorrows. Still less could Isaiah have understood how Christ's miracles on the diseased and the demoniacs were not only types of this salvation by substitution, but actual parts of it; how by a divine sympathy which identified Him, so to speak, with the sufferers whom He cured, He entered into their position, and shared in His own spirit their sorrows,—so that in every miracle which He performed upon the victims of Satan, to release them from the misery and bondage brought upon them by sin, He was, as really as when He died as their sub-

stitute, fulfilling the prediction of the prophet. None but the same Spirit that enabled Matthew to interpret, in its mysterious and profound depths of meaning, the language written five hundred years before, could have enabled Isaiah, in entire ignorance of that meaning, to have recorded it.

10. 'So the priest gave him (David) hallowed bread; for there was no bread there but the shew-bread that was taken from before the Lord' (1 Sam. xxi. 6).

'For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice' (Hosea vi. 6).

'Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungered, and they that were with him; how he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shew-bread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them that were with him, but only for the priests? . . . For if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless' (Matt. xii. 3, etc. See also Mark ii. 26; Luke vi. 4).

The reference in this passage by our Lord to the first book of Samuel, and to one of the minor prophets, not only authenticates them both as forming part of the Hebrew canon, but illustrates in a striking manner the divine authority to be attached to their words. In order to silence the objections of the Pharisees, who had accused His disciples of profaning the Sabbath in consequence of their plucking and eating the ears of corn on that day, He appeals, as to the ultimate standard, not to His own decision as the Son of God upon the point in dispute, but to the authority of the words of Hosea, illustrated by the facts of Samuel's narrative. Such a mode of settling the controversy necessarily presupposed both the infallible truth and the supreme authority of the standard referred to.

11. 'Behold My servant, whom I uphold; Mine elect, in whom My soul delighteth: I have put My Spirit upon Him; He shall bring forth judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not cry, nor lift up, nor cause His voice to be heard in the street. A bruised reed shall He not break, and the smoking flax shall He not quench: He shall bring forth judgment unto truth.

He shall not fail nor be discouraged, till He have set judgment in the earth : and the isles shall wait for His law' (Isa. xlii. 1-4).

'But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew Himself from thence : and great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all ; and charged them that they should not make Him known : that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Behold My servant, whom I have chosen ; My beloved, in whom My soul is well pleased : I will put My Spirit upon Him, and He shall show judgment to the Gentiles. He shall not strive, nor cry ; neither shall any man hear His voice in the streets. A bruised reed shall He not break, and smoking flax shall He not quench, till He send forth judgment unto victory ; and in His name shall the Gentiles trust' (Matt. xii. 15-21).

The occurrence of the remarkable expression, '*That it might be fulfilled,*' in the narrative of Matthew, once more directs our attention to the inseparable connection between the infallibility of the words of ancient prophecy and the conduct of our Lord in some of the most important transactions of His life. His withdrawing at this moment from the hostile attempts of the Pharisees,—the prosecution of His work of healing in secret, instead of confronting His enemies, and discomfiting or destroying them by His almighty power, —His gentleness, in submitting to wrath instead of meeting it with the resources of His Godhead,—are represented as circumstances not only characteristic of the meek and lowly One, but in some sense necessary in order that the inspired words which spake of them long before might not one of them fall to the ground without the fulfilment.

12. 'And Jonah was in the belly of the fish three days and three nights' (Jonah i. 17).

'An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign ; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas : for as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth' (Matt. xii. 39, 40).

The typical character of the history of Jonah, even in its minute particulars, which is here asserted or assumed by our Lord, is itself a sufficient proof that the record of it in the Old Testament was prepared under the plenary inspiration which, unknown to the narrator, impregnated its historical details with predictive meaning. But the same conclusion is also certified by the circumstance that the truth of our Lord's resurrection is bound up with the minute historical particular of the precise time during which Jonah was confined in the fish's belly,—this being the only sign given to the Jews for a ground of their belief.

13. 'And He said, Go and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed' (Isa. vi. 9, 10).

'I will open my mouth in a parable; I will utter dark sayings of old' (Ps. lxxviii. 2).

'Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing, see not; and hearing, they hear not; neither do they understand. And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them' (Matt. xiii. 13-15. See also Mark iv. 12; John xii. 39; Acts xxviii. 25).

'All these things spake Jesus to the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake He not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world' (Matt. xiii. 34, 35).

Both the unbelief of the Jewish people, and the particular character which, in consequence, our Lord's teaching as-

sumed, when He spake to them only in parables, are here intimately associated with the infallibility of the ancient Scriptures. Indeed, the words of Isaiah referred to by our Lord, are in express terms declared by Paul in the Acts of the Apostles to be the utterance of the Holy Ghost.

14. 'So God created man in His own image : in the image of God created He him ; male and female created He them' (Gen. i. 27).

'Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife, and they shall be one flesh' (Gen. ii. 24).

'And He (Jesus) answered, and said unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the beginning, made them male and female ; and said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh ? Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder' (Matt xix. 4-6. See also Mark x. 6 ; 1 Cor. vi. 16 ; Eph. v. 31).

The answer of our Lord to the questions of the Pharisees about divorce, furnishes a striking example of the superhuman and absolute authority which He attributed to the inspired Scriptures. As Himself the Son of God and the Creator, He might have fallen back upon His own divine authority as the source of the law of marriage. But, on the contrary, He rests it upon the authority of the book of Genesis as infallibly decisive of the question, when it tells how in the beginning man was made a male and a female, and that in their very creation they were joined by God, so as to be one flesh. But having based the general marriage law upon the statements of the book of Genesis as divinely authoritative whenever it speaks, He went on, in answer to the inquiry about divorce, to declare upon His own authority the exceptions to that law, because these had not been referred to in Genesis. '*I say unto you*, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery.' The authority of the author of



Genesis, and His own authority as the Son of God, are put precisely on the same level, in so far as regards the decision that was to settle the question in dispute. Such a mode of appeal to the Old Testament Scriptures is inconsistent with the notion of their being human writings, or indeed with any theory of inspiration which does not attribute to them both infallible truth and supreme authority.

15. 'Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass' (Zech. ix. 9).

'Then sent Jesus two disciples, saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto Me. And if any man shall say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, Tell ye the daughter of Zion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass' (Matt. xxi. 1-5. See also John xv. 14).

As on many other occasions, the assigned reason for the events recorded by Matthew is the necessity of realizing in actual fact the inspired words of Zechariah.

16. 'For Mine house shall be called a house of prayer for all people' (Isa. lvi. 7).

'Is this house, which is called by My name, become a den of robbers in your eyes?' (Jer. vii. 11.)

'And (Jesus) said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer, but ye have made it a den of thieves' (Matt. xxi. 13. See also Mark xi. 17; Luke xix. 46).

The double reference to Isaiah and Jeremiah in our Lord's rebuke to the profaners of the Temple, cannot be interpreted in consistency with a partial and mutilated theory of inspiration.

17. 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast Thou ordained strength' (Ps. viii. 3).

‘And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things which He did, and the children crying in the Temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased, and said unto Him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise?’ (Matt. xxi. 15, 16.)

In this passage, our Lord, in His quotation from the eighth Psalm, follows the rendering of the Septuagint. But if the Psalm quoted can bear the meaning put upon it, of which the rendering of the Septuagint is itself a proof, the application of it made, although not in the mind of the author of the Psalm, would only afford a stronger proof of the supernatural guidance under which its language was selected originally.

18. ‘The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. This is the Lord’s doing; it is marvellous in our eyes’ (Ps. cxviii. 22, 23).

‘And He shall be for a sanctuary; but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence, to both the houses of Israel. . . . And many among them shall stumble, and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken’ (Isa. viii. 14, 15).

‘Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the Scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord’s doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes? . . . And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder’ (Matt. xxi. 42, 44. See also Mark xii. 10; Luke xx. 17; Acts iv. 11; Eph. ii. 20; 1 Pet. ii. 4).

The double reference by our Lord to both Psalms and Isaiah is itself sufficiently remarkable as evidence of their divine authority. But when we remember that the purpose for which He appeals to these ancient testimonies was to declare and demonstrate the utter rejection of His countrymen because of their unbelief, the appeal becomes all the more striking. As if He needed for such a solemn and awful sen-

tence to confirm His words by the highest and most absolute of all authority, He refers to the prophetic witness spoken long before, and made infallibly sure and authoritative by divine inspiration, as if He could appeal to nothing higher ; and grounding upon it, as the reason that made His own declaration so unchangeably certain, He adds, ‘ *Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.*’

19. ‘Moreover, He said, I am the God of thy father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob’ (Ex. iii. 6).

‘But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living’ (Matt. xxii. 31. See also Mark xxii. 26 ; Luke xx. 37).

The answer of our Lord to the cavils of the Sadducees, whose doctrine it was that there was no resurrection of the dead, is especially valuable in connection with the question of inspiration. Without any qualification, He refers to the history of the book of Exodus as containing what was ‘spoken by God,’ and containing it in such a form of absolute purity and exemption from even verbal error, as to warrant Him to argue not only from its general substance and meaning, but also from the minutest forms of expression used. The denial that He had to meet, was the denial on the part of the Sadducees of a future state of existence for man, whether in a disembodied or embodied condition. He meets this denial with an appeal to the words of Exodus, which declared, after Abraham and Isaac and Jacob had been dead for many years, that God still asserted, ‘*I am their God;*’ and He argues that, as God was not a God of the dead, but of the living, the covenant relationship involved in such an assertion necessarily implied that the patriarchs were still alive. But not only were they alive, although long since dead ; but that same covenant relationship between them as God’s people, and God as their God, embraced their bodies as well

as their souls; the seal of the covenant having been impressed upon their flesh, so that even their worser part, being held within the bonds of the promise, awaited a resurrection to life also. The resurrection of the dead,—implying both a continuance of life beyond the grave, and also life in conjunction with a risen body,—was a doctrine thus proved in opposition to the Sadducees, by a reference to the words used in Exodus when narrating the appearance of God to Moses at the bush, and forms the strongest possible testimony to the plenary inspiration of the Old Testament. A variation as to the name of God in the original record, or a change, in the very slightest, as to the language employed by the author of the ancient history, would have subverted the whole foundation of the reasoning, and made our Lord's argument void. The deep and unexpected truth brought out of the expression used, and which could not have been in the view of any human author left to his own powers in recording the facts, even although previously acquainted with them, sufficiently proves the supernatural guidance under which he wrote. But especially, the dependence of the truth upon a form of expression so minute and peculiar, and the selection of which, amid many others, according to human judgment, equally available, was so unlikely if the writer was left to himself, bring out in a remarkable manner the evidence of a controlling power on the part of God that secured in the narrative a verbal fidelity superhuman. It is impossible to imagine that our Lord could have grounded His plea for the doctrine of the resurrection upon the witness of language short of infallibly true.

20. 'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool' (Ps. cx. 1).

'He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call Him Lord, saying, The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou on My right hand, till I make Thine enemies Thy footstool? If David then call Him Lord, how is He his son?' (Matt. xxii. 43-45. See also Mark xii. 36; Luke xx. 42; Acts ii. 34.)

First of all, we find in this statement of our Saviour to the Pharisees, a recognition of the supernatural influence under which David wrote, from the use of the common terms employed to express it—David *in spirit* called Him Lord. But the purpose for which the quotation is made, when properly taken into account, brings out still more distinctly the evidence afforded for the inspiration of the Old Testament. It is employed to set forth the fundamental doctrine of the union of the divine and human natures in the person of Immanuel, under a form of language which, unless it were shaped and selected by infallible inspiration, could not have been safely appealed to as evidence of a truth so mysterious and important. We can hardly believe that David himself recognised in his own language the depth and accuracy of meaning necessary to lay the sure foundations of an argument so high as that which it furnished to our Saviour. And it must have required the foresight of that omniscient Spirit, through whom our Lord interpreted David's words, to have moulded them by His inspiration into that precise form which they actually have; and which, unknown to the prophet, was to afford the materials to build up the proof of the divinity and incarnation of Him who was both David's Lord and his son. The mystery of godliness, God manifested in the flesh of the seed of David, which the Pharisees could not understand, was made by our Saviour to rest on a single sentence extracted from the book of Psalms; and the grand truth so demonstrated shows by its own infallible certainty the infallibility of the foundation on which it rests secure.

21. 'They gave Me also gall for My meat; and in My thirst they gave Me vinegar to drink' (Ps. lxi. 21).

'They gave Him vinegar to drink, mingled with gall: and when He had tasted thereof, He would not drink. . . . And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave Him to drink' (Matt. xxvii. 34, 48. See also Mark xv. 23, 36; Luke xxiii. 36; John xix. 28, 30).

It is impossible to imagine that any human writing, unless



shaped and directed by the Spirit, could have embodied beforehand, in language suited to represent the facts, the circumstances here recorded by the evangelist. Either we must recall our admission of the historical veracity of Scripture, and assert that David did not write the prediction, and that Matthew did not truly narrate the facts; or we must, in addition to its historical veracity, admit that this portion of the Old Testament was written under supernatural inspiration.

22. 'They part My garments among them, and cast lots upon My vesture' (Ps. xxii. 18).

'And (they) parted His garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted My garments among them, and upon My vesture did they cast lots' (Matt. xxvii. 35. See also Mark xv. 24; Luke xxiii. 34; John xix. 24).

The accomplishment of the prediction in the Psalms by the conduct of the soldiers at the crucifixion, as recorded in all the Gospel narratives, is quite incompatible with the idea of a partial or mutilated inspiration in the case of the Old Testament. The question whether the clause in Matthew noting the fulfilment of the prophecy, and not found in many manuscripts, is the true reading or not, is immaterial to the argument. The clause is fully given in John, where there is no doubt about the reading.

23. 'All they that see Me laugh Me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying, He trusted on the Lord that He would deliver him: let Him deliver him, seeing He delighted in him' (Ps. xxii. 7).

'And they that passed by reviled Him, wagging their heads. . . . He trusted in God; let Him deliver him now, if He will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God' (Matt. xxvii. 39, 43. See also Mark xv. 29; Luke xxiii. 35).

Here again the alternative is between the denial of the historical credibility of one or other of the two writers, and the admission of the fact of plenary inspiration.

24. 'My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' (Ps. xxii. 1.)

'And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?' (Matt. xxvii. 46. See also Mark xv. 34.)

The dying exclamation of our Lord, uttered in the very language of the twenty-second Psalm, can be construed in no other light than as an appropriation to Himself of the prediction contained in it, and is His parting testimony to the supernatural inspiration of the written word.

The examples now given from the Gospel by Matthew of the witness borne by the New Testament to the inspiration of the Old might be multiplied greatly, and are to be found hardly less abundant in the other historical books. They comprehend many of the testimonies borne by our Lord Himself, which, in so far as they apply to the question, must by all who recognise His divine authority be accepted as decisive of it. But even when not emanating from the Divine Redeemer Himself, and drawn from the assertions, express or implied, of the sacred historians, they must be taken as conclusive evidence of the inspiration they affirm; unless we are prepared to withdraw the admission of the reality of that supernatural revelation by which the writers were instructed in the facts they record, or of their historical veracity in recording them. The testimonies are far too frequent and distinct, and too much a part of the substance of the writing forming with it one organic whole, to allow the possibility of their being cut out of the sacred narrative as inaccuracies and mistaken notions of the writers, while its historical credibility is retained.

That the evidence, if accepted at all, amounts to a proof of inspiration in the strictest sense plenary, must be apparent from the slenderest consideration of the passages adduced. These passages in all cases expressly, or by an implication as strong as if it were expressly, attest the infallible truth or the supreme and divine authority of the declarations of the Old

Testament; and not merely the Old Testament in its substance or general idea. Sometimes it is more prominently and conspicuously the infallible truth of Old Testament words that is asserted, as when the doctrine of the resurrection, or the doctrine of the Godhead and manhood of Christ, is proved or confirmed by a reference to its statements. Sometimes it is the absolute and divine authority embodied in its precepts that is the point more strongly exhibited, as when the Old Testament prohibition to tempt the Lord, or the Old Testament decision on marriage, is held out as an authority from which there is no appeal, and which must be conclusive of the dispute. But in whatever form it is given, the witness to inspiration is one which, if admitted at all, must be held as evidence for inspiration not partial, but plenary, and embodying the two grand elements of a supernatural inspiration,—namely, infallible truth and supreme or divine authority.

But further, an examination of the passages adduced, and of others of a similar import in the New Testament, will unavoidably lead to the conclusion that the inspiration which they substantiate is one co-extensive with the Old Testament canonical writings, and not to be looked upon as proved in regard to some, but not proved in regard to other, passages of the sacred volume. It is true indeed that the evidence of citation or reference by the New Testament writers applies directly only to the passages or books in the Old Testament quoted or alluded to. But apart altogether from the proof afterwards to be adduced, that in dealing with the Old Testament, our Lord Himself, and the New Testament writers generally, dealt with it as a whole, and made no distinction between one passage of the canonical books and another in regard to authority, there is another consideration which plainly leads to the conclusion that the inspiration ascribed to some portions by the manner of quotation and allusion, is an inspiration that equally belongs to all.

It is impossible, after examination of the manner in which these quotations and allusions are made, to imagine a reason that would limit them to one, more than to another, depart-

ment or sentence of the Old Testament, except the obvious reason that they were so limited by the occasions or requirements of the topics treated, and in connection with which they are actually made. It is impossible to imagine that our Lord's appeals to the Old Testament Scriptures were restricted to those passages which had an inspiration which others forming part with them of the same context, being the production of the same writer, or at least mingling in the record of the same divine revelation, had not. It is equally impossible to imagine that the New Testament writers selected a sentence here or a clause there from the text of the earlier Scriptures, upon the principle that those selected possessed a higher privilege of supernatural revision than others embodied with them in the same writing side by side.

Indeed, no reason can account for the selection, except one derived from what the subject handled required or suggested in the way of illustration or confirmation or proof; and no reason, therefore, that would not have suggested and justified quotation from and reference to other Old Testament passages, had they been found necessary or adapted to the purposes of the author. The free and indiscriminate manner in which the New Testament writers refer to the ancient Scriptures when it is necessary or expedient for their object, sufficiently proves that the absence of citation and allusion in the case of a few books of the Old Testament, and of many passages of books actually quoted, arose from no defect in the supernatural inspiration of the one as compared with the other, but solely from considerations arising out of the facts or truths to be illustrated or established. Even had we no formal or separate proof of the fact, that both our Lord Himself, and the later Scripture writers after His example, recognised all the books, and all the portions of the books, of the earlier canon as possessed of the same standing, the indiscriminate manner of appeal to them in the New Testament, although from the very nature of the case it must be made to some and not to all, would itself furnish evidence of the same inspiration in all.

But the testimony of the didactic writings of the New Testament offered to the Old is no less remarkable than that of the historical books. Let us take, as an example, the evidence suggested by the Epistle to the Hebrews, taking for granted, as in the case of Matthew's narrative, the authenticity and credibility of the writing, and confining ourselves to a few out of the many testimonies which it presents.

The object of the epistle generally, addressed as it is to Hebrew converts, is to show the superiority of the gospel to the ancient covenant. As a means of doing so, the apostle in the first chapter establishes the superiority of Christ, the Mediator of the gospel dispensation, over angels, the mediators of the old covenant, by a series of quotations from the Old Testament writings, which indirectly, but in the strongest possible manner, exhibits the belief of Paul in connection with their supernatural authority and inspiration. The quotations in the first chapter, being closely connected, and all addressed to the same object, may be taken together.

1. 'The Lord hath said unto Me, Thou art My Son ; this day have I begotten Thee' (Ps. ii. 7).

'Thus saith the Lord of hosts, . . . I will be his Father, and he shall be My son' (2 Sam. vii. 8, 14).

'Worship Him, all ye gods' (Ps. xcvi. 7).

'Who maketh His angels spirits, His ministers a flaming fire' (Ps. civ. 4).

'Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever : the sceptre of Thy kingdom is a right sceptre. Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness : therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows' (Ps. xlv. 6, 7).

'Of old hast Thou laid the foundations of the earth ; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands. They shall perish, but Thou shalt endure ; yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment : as a vesture shalt Thou change them, and they shall be changed : but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall have no end' (Ps. cii. 25-27).

'The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit Thou at My right



hand, until I make 'Thine enemies Thy footstool' (Ps. cx. 1).

'But unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My son, this day have I begotten thee?'

'And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son.'

'And again, when He bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him.'

'And of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.'

'But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever : a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even Thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.'

'And, Thou, Lord, hast in the beginning laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the work of Thy hands : they shall perish, but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt Thou fold them up, and they shall be changed : but Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.'

'But to which of the angels said He at any time, Sit on My right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?' (Heb. i. 5-13.)

Taking, in the first instance, by themselves the series of passages cited by the apostle from the different Psalms and Samuel, and comparing them with the quotations as they occur in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and as applied there to Christ, it is impossible to resist the conclusion of the supernatural inspiration of the original authors, without denying that Paul himself was instructed by revelation in the application of them to the person and office of Christ. It is a possible thing that the statements of the Old Testament, and its types, centuries before, may have no application at all to our Lord,—that the coincidences between the prophetic language and typical events or persons on the one side, and the cha-

racter and work of Christ on the other, may be accidental, or a mere fancy of the writer. But in that event, we must recall the concession that Paul wrote by revelation of God, and deny the supernatural source of his knowledge and teaching. We must do more. We must deny also his historical veracity; for, in urging upon the Hebrew Christians the doctrines deduced from the prophecies and types that had gone before, he makes his appeal to them to receive and submit to these as truths given by God in His earlier revelation, and which the converts were bound to accept at his hands, because not his own, but God's. In refusing, then, to acknowledge the supernatural inspiration of the writings cited, there can remain to us no consistent alternative except to deny that the Epistle to the Hebrews forms part of a miraculous revelation, and that the author wrote what he knew to be true. But if, on the contrary, both the supernatural character and the historical veracity of the writing be granted, we are shut up to the conclusion that the Psalms and the book of Samuel were divinely written, not with the wisdom which their human authors had, and in reference to events within their knowledge only, but with a superhuman insight into the grand doctrines and facts of the Christianity of the future, which infallibly guided their pens to the selection of language and thought both adequate and accurate to express the very mind of God respecting His incarnate Son. No theory of inspiration making a compromise between the human element and the divine in Scripture, to the injury of either in its fulness, can satisfy the case of writings minutely true in their declaration of the mysteries of Christ's nature and office hundreds of years before He was manifested in the flesh, and exhibiting, as the illustration of these, historical persons and events in their typical relations to Him. Both in the language of the writings themselves, and in Paul's appeal to them as embodying a divine revelation of truth respecting Christ, we have the strongest ground to accept them as given by inspiration.

2. 'I will declare Thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise Thee' (Ps. xxii. 22).

‘And I will wait upon the Lord, . . . and I will look for Him. Behold, I and the children whom the Lord hath given me’ (Isa. viii. 17, 18).

‘For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying, I will declare Thy name unto My brethren; in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee.’

‘And again, I will put My trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children whom God hath given Me’ (Heb. ii. 11–13).

In the second chapter of the epistle, the apostle shows the reason why the Son of God, although superior to the angels, yet humbled Himself to an inferiority to them by becoming man, and cites both the Psalms and Isaiah in confirmation. In the passage from the twenty-second Psalm, David is expressing his experience as a deeply exercised child of God, and his resolution to declare God’s name to his brethren in the congregation. In the passage from Isaiah, the prophet is declaring his resolution, for himself and his children, to trust in God and wait for Him amid the defection of his countrymen. The application of these two passages as prophetic of Christ, and illustrative of His relations to His people,—the very language of David and Isaiah being put into the lips of the Son of God as His language,—could be made only in consequence of both David and Isaiah being in so far typical of Christ, and their experience and feelings parallel to His. But it required the Spirit of the same God whose providence could shape kings and prophets in other days into unconscious representatives of the coming Saviour, to guide by His inspiration the historical delineation or the descriptive language applicable to them, so as to accurately declare a greater than David or Isaiah.

3. ‘To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My work. Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known My ways: unto whom I swear in

My wrath, that they should not enter into My rest' (Ps. xcv. 7, etc.).

'Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness; when your fathers tempted Me, proved Me, and saw My works forty years. Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart; and they have not known My ways. So I swear in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest). Take heed, brethren; . . . While it is said, To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. . . . But with whom was He grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? And to whom swear He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not?' (Heb. iii. 7, etc.)

'For we which have believed do enter into His rest; as He said, As I have sworn in My wrath, if they shall enter into My rest. . . . Again, He limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To-day, after so long a time; as it is said, To-day, if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts. . . . Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief' (Heb. iv. 3, etc.).

Now, at the outset, we find Paul in this passage quoting the language of the Psalms, and, without apparently feeling any necessity of explanation, directly asserting that it is the language of the Holy Ghost,—'As the Holy Ghost saith.' But next we find the history of the provocation and unbelief of the Israelites under Moses in the wilderness, and their forfeiture of the rest promised, set forth as Christian teaching, divinely applicable to believers now, not only in the way of illustrating their duty by example or warning, but also of establishing and proving doctrine. It is impossible that this could have been so, unless the whole conduct of Israel in the matter of the temptation, and of the rest promised and lost, had been so arranged in the course of things by the disposing hand of God, and the events of history a thousand

years before so ordered and brought about as to constitute them representatives of gospel truth. This, in the first place, was a supernatural act of God, embodying in the history of the world, ages before, a long series of occurrences that should bear a minute prophetic signification. But, secondly, there was another supernatural act of God necessary, before the apostle could make the use of these occurrences that he has actually done. It was necessary that the history of them, shaped with a view to the prophetic or typical references and relations which they embodied, should be written with infallible accuracy, so as to be not only a history like any other, containing a true narrative of the events for the time being, but also a history embracing the fulfilments of the future. This was no less an act of miraculous power than the former, and could be accomplished only by the plenary inspiration of the historian. Without the one or without the other, the argument of the apostle would have been impossible, because the very foundation of it in the statements of the Old Testament would have been insecure.

4. 'And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all' (Gen. xiv. 18-20).

'The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek' (Ps. cx. 4).

'As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec. . . . Called of God an high priest, after the order of Melchisedec' (Heb. v. 6, 10).

'Jesus, made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec. For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; to whom also



Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being, by interpretation, King of righteousness, and after that also, King of Salem, which is, King of peace; without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but, made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually. . . . Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him. If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? . . . After the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For He testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec. . . . For those (the Levitical) priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by Him that said unto Him, The Lord sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec' (Heb. vi. 20; vii. 1-21).

Assuming (as we are entitled to do) the authenticity and credibility of the book of Genesis and the book of Psalms, and that they were written at the respective dates which they claim to have assigned to them; assuming also the historical veracity of the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews in connection with the supernatural revelation given to him, and the propriety of the application of the statements of the more ancient writings, as he has applied them, to Christ, we have three historical persons presented to our view in certain respects parallel. ♣ We have Melchisedec, king of Salem, in the earlier world, standing out in a near and supernatural relationship to the Most High, insulated and singular in his office as a priest of God in his time, and not only separated from the line of the chosen people, but holding a priesthood independent of any that was divinely established among them, and superior to it. We have next, after a long interval of time, Solomon set apart in an extraordinary manner

by God, as a king to reign over His people, and as a priest to build His earthly temple, and inaugurate it with intercessions and sacrifices such as human lips had never spoken or hands offered on the altar. And lastly, after another interval of time, like the former, of a thousand years, we have the Lord Jesus Christ appearing as the King and Priest of His people, in a manner compared with which all that had gone before Him were mere shadows and anticipations.

Now the likeness of Melchisedec was made in some sense to reappear in Solomon, when the language of the hundred and tenth Psalm was applied to him; and still more the likeness of both Melchisedec and Solomon was reproduced, when Christ, as the antitype of both, was manifested as the true King of righteousness and peace, the only Priest that ever actually realized the priestly character symbolized in the order of Melchisedec and in the acts of Solomon. The threefold parallel could have occurred in the history of this world only through the supernatural intervention of Him who moulds the characters, and orders the position and actions of men according to the purposes He has in view to accomplish. And the history of the three could have been written in the same language, so that, as each successive parallel arose and answered to the other, the very words descriptive of the first could be taken up and repeated with accuracy and propriety in their application to the succeeding, only in consequence of an inspiration from God no less supernatural.

The application of the terms that truly described Melchisedec or Solomon to the Lord Jesus Christ, in order to prove the reality and perfection of His priestly character and work, is a remarkable evidence, indirectly given, but not less strong on that account, to the inspired character of the Old Testament writings. None but one on whom had fallen the gift of prophetic speech, could have selected his expression so as to accomplish the end in view. The very silence of Scripture is dictated and determined by inspiration in those cases where there is a meaning in the silence no less superhuman

than in the speech. It is by what the sacred historian has not said, as truly as by what he has said, that Melchisedec is set forth as a type of Christ. He is known by what he was not, as really as by what he was, to be the Scripture parallel to the Son of God. His pedigree, buried in the significant silence of the book of Genesis, has warranted the apostle to say of him, in respect of his typical character, that he was without father and without mother, and without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; and so standing out alone as a priest in that typical order that bears his name. It is thus that the inspired silence of the sacred historian, when his lips were held and did not speak, has become the ground for the argument by which the apostle demonstrates that the Son abideth a Priest for ever, and that the office which He holds is that of an unchangeable priesthood, which cannot pass from Him to any other. No inspiration, except one supernatural and plenary, is consistent with the argument of the apostle.

5. 'Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah; not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers, in the day that I took them by the hand, to bring them out of the land of Egypt, which covenant they brake, although I was an husband unto them, saith the Lord; but this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, saith the Lord: I will put My law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be My people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and remember their sins no more' (Jer. xxxi. 31-34).

'For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For, finding fault with them, He saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel,

and with the house of Judah : not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt ; because they continued not in My covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put My laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts ; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to Me a people : And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord : for all shall know Me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away' (Heb. viii. 7-13).

‘ For by one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us : for after that He had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord ; I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them ; and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin ’ (Heb. x. 14-18).

There are various things to be noticed here, as bearing upon the question of inspiration. First, We have another example in this place of the manner in which the apostle ascribes the language he quotes indiscriminately to the human author or to the Holy Ghost, as being in different senses equally the production of both. Secondly, We have an instance, not infrequent, of the apostle reasoning, not on the general meaning and substance of the passage, but also upon the minutest forms of expression that occur in it, as a foundation not less secure and infallible. His argument for the abolition of the Jewish economy, and the substitution of the gospel in its stead, is made to turn upon the word *new*, as indicating the near abrogation of that which preceded, and the introduc-

tion of another system. Considering the rooted prejudices of the Hebrew converts in favour of the Mosaic system, the argument for its abrogation, founded on such a basis, must have taken for granted the mutual belief of both parties in the plenary fidelity of the language of the Old Testament. And thirdly, It is upon the very same basis that he rests his proof of the perfection and perpetuity of the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, as contrasted with the priests and priestly sacrifices of the Mosaic law. It was because these sacrifices were many, and constantly renewed, that they gave evidence of their inherent imperfection, and required to be abolished and superseded. The perfection of Christ's sacrifice, on the contrary, was demonstrated by the fact that it was but one, and never repeated,—having, in its once being offered, perfected for ever them for whom it made atonement; thus proving that no other offering was needed, or could ever supersede it, and that He Himself who presented it abideth a priest for ever.

6. 'And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin-offerings of atonement; once in the year shall he make atonement upon it, throughout your generations: it is most holy unto the Lord' (Ex. xxx. 10).

'And shall take of the blood of the bullock, and the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about' (Lev. xvi. 18).

'And a man that is clean shall gather up the ashes of the heifer, and lay them up without the camp in a clean place; and it shall be kept for the congregation of the children of Israel for a water of separation: it is a purification for sin' (Num. xix. 9).

'But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and the errors of the people: the Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing: which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts



and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats and drinks, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation. But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood, He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh; how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works, to serve the living God?' (Heb. ix. 7, etc.)

A comparison between the apostle's statement and the ancient Scriptures, from which he quotes so largely, will satisfy any one that he at least believed, and plainly assumes in this passage, both the historical veracity of the record and the supernatural origin of the whole ceremonial law, even in its minutest services, as described in the three books of Exodus, Leviticus, and Numbers, from which he cites. But there is plainly much more than this implied. The interpretation he puts on some of its details he expressly asserts to be the meaning which the Holy Ghost put on it, being impregnated with Christian truth even in its ceremonial observances. And grounded upon these details, he makes to rest the illustration and assertion of some of the most fundamental and peculiar articles of the Christian faith. The insufficiency of all outward obedience to satisfy the conscience, or to clear it from guilt,—the doctrine of Christ's presentation of His atonement within heaven itself, to make reconciliation for iniquity,—the effect of His atonement in procuring an eternal redemption for the sinner,—the influence of it in purifying the soul from the sense and fear of sin,—and its power to quicken and strengthen the believer for willing obedience;—these truths are asserted upon the ground of that interpretation of the ceremonial law which he gives, and

which he declares to be the meaning intended by the Spirit. It is quite impossible to accept this interpretation as true, without seeing that it necessarily implies the truth of all that the Old Testament has declared, even in the minutest details of the ancient law, and the divine certainty of the record through which they are known to us.

7. 'Sacrifice and offering Thou didst not desire ; Mine ears hast Thou opened : burnt-offering and sin-offering hast Thou not required. Then said I, Lo, I come : in the volume of the book it is written of Me, I delight to do Thy will, O My God ; yea, Thy law is within My heart ' (Ps. xl. 6, etc.).

'Wherefore, when He cometh into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared Me. In burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure : then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of Me) to do Thy will, O God. Above, when He said, Sacrifice, and offering, and burnt-offerings, and offering for sin, Thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein, which are offered by the law ; then He said, Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second. By the which will we are sanctified, through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all ' (Heb. x. 5-10).

The citation by the apostle of the fortieth Psalm, and the special application he makes of it to establish and illustrate the priestly work of Christ in making atonement for sin, is another example of the use to which ancient prophecy is so often put beyond what was in the view of the prophet, and of doctrinal conclusions built upon it which he never contemplated. The practical experience and feelings of David expressed in the Psalm become, under the interpretation of the author of the epistle, typical and representative of Christ, and the foundation for an assertion of the great truths of His incarnation and atonement. If the interpretation put upon it is to be accepted, there can be no doubt felt as to the inspiration under which the language of the Psalm was written. In whatever way the difference between the original text of

the prediction in the Psalm, and the rendering of it in the quotation, is to be accounted for, it does not affect the evidence on the point, if the interpretation and application by the apostle are not to be rejected altogether. The adoption by Paul of the translation found in the Septuagint must, by all who acknowledge his authority, be counted conclusive as to the meaning of the Psalm; and the fact that it has been so translated by the Seventy, seems itself, and apart from this, to prove that the language of the original admits of the sense put upon it.

8. 'For thus saith the Lord of hosts, Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the Desire of all nations shall come: and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts' (Hag. ii. 6, 7).

'See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh: for if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven; whose voice then shook the earth: but now He hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore, we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear' (Heb. xii. 25-28).

The reference to the transactions recorded in Exodus, and the express citation of the prediction of Haggai, are here conjoined to bind with solemn and divine authority upon the conscience of the Hebrew Christians the command, 'See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh.' If the records referred to were merely human compositions, and not given by supernatural inspiration of God, they could have no legitimate weight to enforce such an exhortation beyond what a human illustration or persuasion of truth might possess.

But besides this, the argument of the apostle presents

another instructive instance of his practice of resting his conclusions, whether for proof of doctrine or inculcation of duty, upon the form and details of the language which he quotes. In this case, the turning-point of the reasoning is the word *once* employed by Haggai in his prophecy; and upon this expression his commentator does not hesitate to rest his argument for the enduring perfection of the Christian, as contrasted with the temporary and transition character of the previous, dispensation. Like the argument for the resurrection in Matthew, turning upon a name applied to God; or the proof of the Godhead and the manhood of our Lord, turning upon a single expression in the Psalms; or the reasoning in Galatians identifying Christ with the seed of Abraham, turning upon the difference between the singular and the plural of the word; or the assertion in a former part of this epistle of the abrogation of the Mosaic law, turning upon a solitary word in an ancient prediction,—the example in the case of Haggai is a remarkable evidence of the apostle's belief in the plenary and verbal perfection of the sacred record. No historical veracity, as exemplified in the writings of men, however complete, can come up to the demands of a practice which, upon the ground of single words and minute differences of expression, seeks to establish doctrines, the belief or unbelief of which shall turn to life or death, and to inculcate duty which carries with it such authority, that to refuse to yield to it is to sin against God. To sustain the weight and import of such consequences, there must be both infallible truth and divine authority in the written word.

Looking back upon the examples taken from the Epistle to the Hebrews, of quotations from and references to the earlier Scriptures, there is seen, in the great majority of them, the same principle of interpretation applied to the exposition of their meaning. There is assumed or taken for granted, what has been called, the double sense of Scripture, or the existence of a meaning in many of the Old Testament writings, additional to that seen or intended by the writer, and having applications beyond what he knew. Unless the truth of this

principle be admitted, it is impossible to accept in any intelligible way the sense and bearing attributed by the apostle to the passages he interprets; or to defend his personal truthfulness when he imposes these interpretations upon others as the mind of the Spirit of God.

That the typology and prophecy especially of the Old Testament have this double reference, is a thing assumed in his system of interpretation, and essential to it. But it is important to remark that this fulness of meaning in the passages interpreted, is due to the passages themselves, and not to the interpreter; and would yield the same double sense to any other interpreter, even although he were not, like the apostle, divinely taught to recognise and educe it from them. Nothing but the special intervention of God throughout the whole course of human redemption, from the earliest beginnings, could have so ordered the persons and events of time, as to make these double, the one over against the other, and all turning their faces to Christ; and nothing but the agency of His Spirit could have embodied in the human speech of the prophets, the same manifold meaning that we find in the events. The admission of this principle makes the interpretations found in the Epistle to the Hebrews intelligible and easy, which nothing else can.

The admission extends much further than to the few passages, as compared with the whole volume, which the apostle has actually quoted and interpreted in his epistle. He has not exhausted the typology of the Old Testament, nor attempted to expound and apply all its prophetic announcements. He has selected but a few, demanded by his aim and subject, leaving the vast majority untouched. But it is impossible to believe, that what he has left unnoticed do not admit of the same method of interpretation, and are not, in point of fact, as rich in deep and supernatural meaning, as those which he has explained and applied under the teaching of that revelation given to him. His supernatural gifts, as one who had received of the Lord what he taught to others, did not impress upon the passages he interpreted a meaning which



they did not possess before, but only brought out a sense which was not less their true sense, that the very writers themselves did not understand it. His example in interpretation is one that other men, though not gifted with revelations as he was, may yet, taught by his methods and precedents, warrantably and profitably follow; and, walking in his footsteps as an interpreter, may equally find in other passages of the Old Testament, a depth of divine truth which the prophets who recorded it searched vainly to discover.

But if this be the case, the argument for the inspiration of the earlier writings of Scripture admits of an extension far beyond the circle of those passages in which we find materials for it in the quotations and references by the apostle. It is impossible to confine it within the limits of what he has exemplified. The truth beyond the human, the meaning deeper and fuller than any contained within the understanding of the writer, that belongs to the Old Testament Scriptures, justifies us in extending far and wide the argument for its inspiration derived from such a source; and rising from the particular examples given by the apostle in his selections from the earlier writings of the sacred volume, we are warranted in attributing to the whole of its typical and prophetic words the like supernatural character.

Even this does not show the full amount of the evidence for inspiration which the principle of interpretation so frequently exemplified by the apostle in the Epistle to the Hebrews suggests to us. There are instances, both there and throughout the other Scriptures, of the application of that principle to passages not strictly typical or prophetic, and having nothing in them of the anticipation of the future which belongs to all type and prophecy. There are many examples of doctrines and truths drawn by our Lord, or by the sacred writers, from Scripture passages, which the passages do not expressly assert, or even primarily embody (apart altogether from predictions of the future, whether by word or act), and a sense and interpretation put upon them which the original authors had as little in view as in the case of the distant fulfilment of prophecy.

Take the instance that occurs in the Gospel by Matthew, and which has already been noticed, of our Lord deducing the fact of the resurrection from the name of God found in the narrative of Moses in connection with the burning bush in the desert. The doctrine of the resurrection of the dead was certainly not expressly asserted in the ancient record, and is indeed not at first sight connected with the words at all. But yet it is a doctrine truly contained in the language of the historian, and to be drawn out of it by good and necessary consequence,—so much so, that the Jews are actually blamed by our Lord for being ignorant of the fact. Or take the example of a precisely similar treatment of Scripture language by the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, also referred to already, in which the recorded fact that Christ died once, and not more than once, is made the foundation for the doctrine of the perfection and completeness of His sacrifice. Here the history of His death, as an occurrence that once took place, and not oftener, does not directly or expressly declare the grand truth of the all-sufficiency of His atonement; and the natural understanding or feeling of man in regard to it, if it is to be interpreted by the practices of the Romish Church in the repetition of the mass, would not, in many cases, lead them to acknowledge the connection between the fact of the one death, and the truth that it is complete. But it is by means of this fact that the apostle demonstrates, in a manner so convincing and impressive, the perfection of the offering.

Both of these truths are but instances of an extent of meaning in the language of Scripture (apart from the case of prophecy) which goes far beyond its primary application, and which very often the man who, in the first instance, employed it, could not have anticipated. There can be no possible ground for asserting, that the principle of interpretation illustrated by our Lord and by His apostle in these examples is to be confined in its application to the comparatively few cases, as contrasted with the whole Scriptures, in which it is used by them, and not rather extended to all identical or similar cases. And if this be so, it opens up a divine depth and

many-sided meaning in Scripture language throughout, which proves it to be divine in its form as well as in its origin, and which nothing but a supernatural inspiration of it can explain.

IV. But in addition to the testimony from the New Testament to the inspiration of particular passages of the earlier volume, leading indirectly to the conclusion of the whole being equally inspired, it is important to advert to those general names or titles under which the Old Testament, as a whole, is spoken of, and which bring out an evidence directly applicable to it all.

The most frequent name under which that collection of books which belong to the earlier division of the sacred volume is spoken of in the New Testament, is 'Scripture,' or more commonly 'the Scriptures,'—the term being used both in the singular and the plural. The word occurs more than fifty times in the New Testament; and uniformly, with perhaps no more than a single exception, denotes those books known to the Jews as belonging to the Old Testament canon. The only instance in which it is found with a different signification, is when it is applied to the Epistles of Paul by the Apostle Peter, who includes them under the general name of Scriptures, in other cases restricted exclusively to the Old Testament books. The Greek word for Scripture is a general one, signifying simply a writing of any kind; and the limitation of it in the sacred volume to the books of the Old Testament, indicates the distinctive prominence that, in the estimation of the Jews, belonged to 'the writing' or 'writings' included in their canon.

The same feeling is manifested in the usual formula employed in quotations from the Old Testament, where the expression 'it is written,' without any more distinctive indication of the place of the quotation, is held to be enough to define it as coming from the sacred volume. The invariable usage of our Lord and of the New Testament writers coincides with that of the Jews in regard to this matter; both parties meaning by the word Scripture or Scriptures the same

collection of books constituting the record of the Old Testament revelation.

Another title, less common, but still frequently employed to designate the Old Testament, arose out of that threefold division of the books contained in it, known among the Jews before the time of Christ, and generally received at His date. Probably the earliest notice of it is to be found in the apocryphal book of Ecclesiasticus. It is mentioned in the writings of Philo; and it is accepted as a well-known and recognised division by Josephus. This threefold classification of the books of the Old Testament—Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms—is adopted by our Lord Himself; and, through the medium of Josephus, can be identified with the writings, neither more nor fewer, which are found in the Old Testament canon at the present day. Sometimes one or more of the three divisions gave a general title, under which were included them all. It was occasionally the Law and the Prophets, or sometimes the Prophets, or the Law, that alone represented the whole of the Old Testament volume. The varied use of the general title, however, was too well known to give rise to any ambiguity; and there is no room for any doubt as to the meaning of the names employed in the New Testament to express the ancient Scriptures.

Apart from the personal sense, to denote the Son of God, the expression ‘the Word’ of God, or ‘the Word’ of the Lord, is also sometimes used to represent the Old Testament writings, although it is still more frequently employed in a secondary sense, to denote the human exposition, or the effects in the soul, of the divine truth which the sacred volume contains.

In a few instances, the phrase ‘oracles of God’ is made use of to denote the Old Testament, or the whole Scriptures, including under the title what may have been published of the New Testament writings as well as the Old.

Now, in the case of all these general titles or descriptions under which the Old Testament as a whole was recognised, we have testimonies bearing upon its inspiration generally, and not simply in reference to particular books or insulated passages.

1. In connection with the name of Scripture, or the Scriptures, we have very distinct evidence, that whatever was included under that name was inspired. It has been remarked as a peculiarity in the Epistle to the Hebrews, that every quotation from the earlier Scriptures introduced into it is prefaced by some form of words which implies the living voice of the speaker, 'He saith,' 'He spake,' 'He beareth witness,' and not merely the testimony of the record, 'It has been written,'—as if the author quoting felt in every quotation the actual presence of Him who had inspired it, and spake through it.<sup>1</sup> But there are two passages especially in which this feeling has so far predominated in the mind of the sacred writer, that Scripture is identified with the Author of Scripture; and in citations from its words, they are spoken of as possessed with the personality, and acting in the actions, of the Godhead.

In the ninth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans, the Scripture is represented as commanding when God commands, and purposing and ordaining when God does so,—an identity between them being for the time and object assumed: 'For the Scripture saith unto Pharaoh, Even for this same purpose have I raised thee up, that I might show My power in thee, and that My name might be declared throughout the earth.' The actual declaration to Pharaoh was one made to him by God through the lips of His servant Moses, and would have sounded strangely in our ears if it had been represented by the apostle, in quoting it, as if made by Moses, as though Moses had said, '*I have raised thee up, that I might show my power in thee;*' thus identifying, in the matter, Moses and God. But the apostle's language does not sound strangely when he identifies the written word with God who uttered it, and ascribes to the former what is actually done and ordained by the latter.<sup>2</sup>

In like manner, in the Epistle to the Galatians, the very same identification of the inspired word with the Inspirer

<sup>1</sup> Westcott: The Bible in the Church, p. 42.

<sup>2</sup> Alford: Greek Test. vol. ii. 383.



is exhibited. In the third chapter we are told 'the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.' The promise of grace here declared to have been proclaimed to Abraham, was actually proclaimed by God Himself; and the manner of the quotation can be accounted for only by the fact that Scripture, in all that it speaks, was so identified in the mind of the apostle with God Himself, that he was led to ascribe the thing done by God to the Scripture which was His word. In both these instances there is very strong evidence that Scripture generally, including all that was comprehended under the name, was regarded by the apostle as equivalent to the utterance personally of God.

The passage so often referred to in Second Timothy, 'All Scripture is given by inspiration of God,' furnishes evidence to the same effect, that whatever, in the estimation of the apostle or of those whom he addressed, was included under the name of Scripture, was written under the supernatural direction of the Spirit. The difference in the way of rendering the words is of no importance in the argument. Whether it is to be translated, 'All Scripture is divinely inspired and is profitable,' or 'Every Scripture divinely inspired is profitable,' does not affect the evidence which the passage offers for the fact of the inspiration of all the writings comprehended under the Holy Scriptures which Timothy had known from a child; and all, therefore, that come under the head of the ancient Hebrew canon, as understood in the time of the apostle, without restricting it to certain books or portions of books, and to certain classes of facts and truths, to the exclusion of others.

It is not needful or desirable, in the argument for inspiration, to rest too much weight on this passage as regards the kind or degree of authority that belongs to Scripture in consequence of it being divinely breathed, or theopneustic. The meaning of the word, and the nature and measure of that inspiration which it ascribes to the Old Testament, can hardly be determined by this single passage taken apart, and

must be judged of by what is elsewhere said of its effects. If it can be shown, that whatever is spoken of as divinely breathed or inspired is marked by the two characteristics of infallible truth and supreme or divine authority, we shall be compelled to accept of the doctrine in its strictest sense. The many testimonies already referred to as proving the presence of these two elements in the Old Testament, define and decide the kind of inspiration spoken of in this passage. But the purpose for which it is adduced at present, is mainly to prove that inspiration, in whatever sense it is understood, belongs equally to all the writings which fall under the head of Scripture, or, as the word was understood generally in the time of the apostle, of the Old Testament. In the case of the various documents included in the ancient canon, there can be no distinction made as to their claim to be alike inspired of God. The highest sense which it can be proved belongs to the word in connection with any one passage, must belong to it in connection with all.

In evidence that inspiration belongs equally to all that is included under the name of Scripture, we may refer also to the testimony of the Apostle Peter. He tells us that ‘no prophecy of *the Scripture* is of any private interpretation; for the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.’<sup>1</sup> In so far as the evidence for the inspiration of Scripture is concerned, it is not necessary to enter into the controversy as to the proper meaning of the expression ‘of private interpretation.’ Apart from that, the passage plainly affirms, that whatever came from the prophetic order of men who were commissioned to write *the Scripture* or the Old Testament, was the product of the supernatural influence of the Holy Ghost.

There are many testimonies which prove that inspiration is to be attributed to Scripture generally, or as a whole. Even where the general name is used in reference to some one or other individual passage, it may still afford proof that everything included under the title is inspired. ‘Ye do

<sup>1</sup> 2 Pet. i. 20.

err,' says our Lord, when declaring the truth of the resurrection, 'not knowing the Scriptures nor the power of God.'<sup>1</sup> His betrayal and surrender into the hands of His enemies was necessary, because 'the Scriptures must be fulfilled.'<sup>2</sup> His crucifixion in company with two malefactors was in such manner that 'the Scripture was fulfilled.'<sup>3</sup> He blamed the disciples on the road to Emmaus for not having seen in the Old Testament predictions the history of His sufferings and death and resurrection, and proceeded to 'expound to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.'<sup>4</sup> One of His last acts before He ascended was to open the 'understanding of the disciples, that they might understand the Scriptures,'<sup>5</sup> adding the remarkable commentary, which so strongly asserts their infallible truth, 'Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day.' When He spake to them of building the temple of His body in three days after it should be destroyed, His disciples did not understand Him; but after the resurrection they 'believed the Scripture, and the word that Jesus had said.'<sup>6</sup> It was His command to the Jews, to 'search the Scriptures,'<sup>7</sup> because in these words there was eternal life, and they testified of Him. Speaking of the Holy Ghost, which He was to give to them that believed on Him, He sought for confirmation to His own words by adding, 'as the Scripture has said.'<sup>8</sup> In defence of the assertion made by Him of His own Godhead, He referred to the Old Testament, and reminded them that 'the Scripture cannot be broken.'<sup>9</sup> Referring to the traitor, who was one of His disciples, and yet was to betray Him, He affirmed the 'certainty of it, that 'the Scripture may be fulfilled.'<sup>10</sup> Again, in connection with the same subject, in the course of His prayer to His Father, He intimated that none who had been given to Him were lost but 'the son of perdition, that the

<sup>1</sup> Matt. xxii. 29.<sup>2</sup> Mark xiv. 49.<sup>3</sup> Mark xv. 28.<sup>4</sup> Luke xxiv. 27.<sup>5</sup> Luke xxiv. 45.<sup>6</sup> John ii. 22.<sup>7</sup> John v. 39.<sup>8</sup> John vii. 38.<sup>9</sup> John x. 35.<sup>10</sup> John xiii. 18.

Scripture might be fulfilled.’<sup>1</sup> In His last agony, when all other predictions concerning Him had been accomplished, and there remained but one unfulfilled, He gathered up His dying breath to say, *I thirst*, ‘that the Scripture might be fulfilled.’<sup>2</sup> In such examples of the use of the general title under which the Old Testament was known, it is impossible not to recognise evidence of infallible truth and divine authority belonging equally to it all.

2. Under the second class of names by which the Old Testament was familiarly known in the day of our Lord, there is found no less distinct evidence of inspiration. In the Gospel by Luke, we have the threefold division of the Hebrew books very plainly recognised, and along with it an impressive assertion by our Saviour of the infallible truth belonging to them: ‘And He said unto them, These are the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled which were written in the law of Moses, and in the Prophets, and in the Psalms, concerning Me.’<sup>3</sup> In Matthew’s narrative of the Sermon on the Mount, our Lord explains His own relations to the Old Testament Scriptures under the twofold designation of the Law and the Prophets, and affirms that the very end for which He came into the world was not to set aside, but to accomplish them: ‘Think not that I am come to destroy the law and the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil.’<sup>4</sup> And then He assigns as the reason for this, the eternal and unchangeable certainty of every one of their declarations, together with the sin of setting at nought the divine authority that dwelt in them: ‘For truly I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in nowise pass from the law till all be fulfilled. Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven; but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.’ Under the same general title of the Law and the Prophets, our Lord,

<sup>1</sup> John xvii. 12.    <sup>2</sup> John xix. 28.    <sup>3</sup> Luke xxiv. 44.    <sup>4</sup> Matt. v. 17.

towards the close of His discourse, recognises the divine and absolute obligation of the moral precepts of the Old Testament as on the same level of authority with the plainest commandments of God's moral law.<sup>1</sup> 'All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.' Once more, in the narrative of Luke, and in connection with the same general title, our Lord declares both the truth and authority of the Old Testament record: 'The law and the prophets were until John: since that time the kingdom of heaven is preached, and every man presseth into it. And it is easier for heaven and earth to pass, than for one tittle of the law to fail.'<sup>2</sup>

3. The occasional use in the New Testament of the name 'the Word of God,' to express the Old Testament writings, furnishes very marked confirmation of its divine origin and inspiration. In the Gospel by Mark, when charging upon the Pharisees the guilt of making void by their traditions the law of God in the decalogue, He first tells them that they reject 'the commandment of God,' that they may keep their own traditions; and then, repeating the same accusation, He goes on to lay at their door the sin of 'making the word of God of none effect' through their traditions.<sup>3</sup> The oral teaching of the Son of God is sometimes spoken of under the same form of expression as 'the word of God;' and, enforcing His own sayings, He renews the solemn warning, and almost in the same language which He had employed in reference to the writings of the Old Testament: 'Heaven and earth shall pass away, but My words shall not pass away.'<sup>4</sup>

4. The few examples of the use of the expression, 'the oracles of God,' to denote the Old Testament books, contribute their evidence to the same fact. Stephen, in the Acts of the Apostles, is represented as speaking of Moses receiving at the hand of the Divine Angel the 'lively oracles' he had given to the Jews; and the Apostle Paul enumerates, as one of the chief privileges which the Jew had received, that the 'oracles

<sup>1</sup> Matt. vii. 12.

<sup>2</sup> Luke xvi. 16.

<sup>3</sup> Mark vii. 13.

<sup>4</sup> Luke v. 1, xxii. 33.



of God' had been committed unto him. The same apostle, in animadverting on the backwardness of the Hebrew Christians to whom he wrote, complains that they had need of some one to teach them what be the first principles of the 'oracles of God.' And the Apostle Peter enjoins it as a duty on teachers, that if any speak, they shall do it as 'the oracles of God.'<sup>1</sup>

The employment in the New Testament of those general names or titles which recognise the Hebrew canonical books as a whole, and deal with them under one designation, is of service in the argument for inspiration in two ways. In the first place, the testimony in such a form borne to the inspiration of the Old Testament, is so much accession to the evidence derived from what the New Testament writers have said of the inspiration of the particular passages in the earlier record quoted or referred to in the later. That evidence, as we have already seen, directly applies only to the passages cited or referred to, but indirectly applies to all the volume. The direct proof of the inspiration of the whole volume, founded on what is said of it as a whole under some one or other of the general names that include it all, is thus an obvious addition of an important kind to the evidence based upon the inspiration of the particular passages. But there is a more important advantage derived from it. For, in the second place, it puts upon the same level, as to authority and inspiration, the whole of the writings included under the general names applicable to the Old Testament, whether they be quoted in the New Testament and referred to or not, and whether we know or do not know the authorship of the particular books, or indeed know anything at all beyond the fact that they truly belong to the collection of writings which are included under the various names of 'the Scripture,' the 'Law and the Prophets,' the 'Word of God,' the 'oracles of God.'

Every book in the Hebrew Bible is not quoted or referred to in the New Testament, and cannot claim, therefore, the authentication which citation or allusion gives. There may be silent quotations when there is nothing sufficient to indicate

<sup>1</sup> Acts. vii. 38; Rom. iii. 2; Heb. v. 12; 1 Pet. iv. 11.

the source. There may be quotations that can be disputed, as being no more than coincidences of thought or language. And making allowance for these, there will be found a few books of the Old Testament, exceptions to the general rule, that the later volume has authenticated the earlier by its quotations and allusions, and lying beyond the range of such kind of direct evidence. Still further, there are portions of the Hebrew canon the authorship of which is unknown or disputed, and in regard to which we cannot assert from knowledge of a direct kind that the writers belonged to that order of prophetic men who were commissioned by God to receive and record His revelations. But the fact that these writings, whether anonymous or not, and whether referred to or not in the New Testament, actually belong to the Hebrew canon, recognised and authenticated by our Lord and by the New Testament penmen, and fall under one or other of the general names by which it is represented, enables us at once to connect such writing with the proof of inspiration furnished in connection with the Old Testament as a whole, and with other special portions of it.

The question, indeed, whether any book, or portion of a book, belongs to the 'Scriptures' of the Old Testament, is a question that must be decided, one way or other, before we need speak of inspiration at all. It is a question to be determined by the ordinary methods and principles of evidence by which apologists judge of what is and is not canonical. But this point once settled, the evidence that proves that 'the Scriptures,' 'the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms,' 'the Word of God,' 'the oracles of God,' are inspired, must apply with equal force to all the writings recognised and admitted under these names. The kind and degree of inspiration that are attributed in the New Testament to any one passage, must belong to all the collected writings, unless it could be shown that there is a difference in the way in which the New Testament speaks in regard to them. When no such difference is alleged, or can be pretended, the supernatural character must attach alike and equally to all.

## CHAPTER IX.

### PROOF OF INSPIRATION—NEW TESTAMENT.

THE evidence for the inspiration of the Old Testament has, for the sake of convenient arrangement, been considered first, and apart from that offered for the New. It would be a great injustice to the subject, however, to imagine that they can be separated in estimating the value of either, or to forget that they are only different applications of the same argument. If it has been satisfactorily established that the writers of the Old Testament Scriptures wrote under the supernatural influences of the Spirit of God, it will be very difficult to deny to the New Testament writers the same divine guidance.

It was not a different religion which was to be taught, when the prophets of the Old Testament declared beforehand the coming salvation, and the evangelists of the New announced it as actually accomplished. It was not a different revelation that had to be recorded, when Moses, at the outset of the written communications from God to man, wrote at the divine commandment all the words he had heard in a book; and when John, at the close of it, again received the divine commandment to write the things which he had seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter. It was the same revelation from first to last, and the same God who gave it. Christianity can never be understood aright unless in connection with all that went before to prepare its way, and to make it possible; Judaism can never be understood unless in connection with all that followed, and that made it intelligible. The New Testament revelation, in so far as regards its doctrines and facts, was no other than

the reality of the Old Testament history and prophecy and type; and can no more be separated from them than the fruit can be separated from the seed, or the man from the child. The four hundred years of silence that lay between the close of the ancient dispensation in Malachi, and the opening of the new in Matthew, was no breach of continuity in the law of the Revelation. The voice of God was not heard for a time upon the earth; but when it spoke once more in John the forerunner of Him who was to come, it was in tones well remembered, and in words which ancient prophecy had spoken. Was the gift of revelation to be renewed, and to utter things greater and better than before; and was the twin gift of inspiration to be denied, that they might be remembered within the narrow hour of human memory and tradition, and afterwards corrupted or forgotten?

I. The divine communications of earlier and later times are the same in so far as regards the supernatural character that belongs to them. In both instances we see God, by a miraculous presentation of truth to chosen men, breaking through the silence of nature, and supplementing the discoveries of reason and conscience by an addition of knowledge which men could not have attained for themselves, and which was yet necessary for them as sinners that needed to be saved. In both instances the revelation was not only supernatural in itself, but also embodied in it a series of supernatural events, alike in their own character and in their use as parts of the divine plan in redemption. The miracles of the Old Testament bear the impress of the same divine power as those recorded to have been wrought in Judea, the latter reproducing the features of the former; and the only material difference in the two cases being what might be expected to emerge in the progress from the infancy to the maturity of the supernatural working out of salvation. The footsteps of God in earlier times, advancing onward to the consummation in the manifestation of His Son in the flesh, are like unto the footsteps which left their mark upon the shores of the Sea of

Galilee. Neither in its own character, nor in the character of the supernatural events which it embodies, is there any difference between the Hebrew history and the writings of the New Testament. It is the same God that speaks in the words, and works in the events, of both.

The messages from God of former and later days are the same also in respect of the written form in which they have been embodied for the instruction of future times. The system of oral and traditionary revelation which had prevailed from the commencement of God's communications to men, was exchanged for another and different when the first, in point of time, of the Old Testament authors was commanded by God to put into the permanent form of a written record the messages of truth which he received. At the date of Moses, when the foundations of a visible Church were laid, and a positive ritual was appointed, and when the types and prophecies of the future were enlarged beyond the possible limits of human memory, we recognise a turning-point in the history of revelation. It assumed the fixed and enduring form, not of an oral but of a written message from heaven, transmitted from age to age, and through many hands, not by the defective instrumentality of memory and tradition, but through the medium of a record that, to each man who received it, might become his daily and permanent study. When the number of the divine communications under the ancient dispensation was completed, the revelations of the new were opened and carried on upon the same principle.

In both cases, as supplementary to, and aiding, the written revelation of God, there were divinely commissioned teachers, who, both in Old Testament and New Testament times, taught and benefited the Church by means of oral revelations and messages delivered to it, and containing His mind and will. The prophets both of the ancient and apostolic Church had their oral teaching in addition to the written and permanent record, in which they spake by the commandment of the Lord. But the oral method of revelation was subordinate to the written, and designed to serve only the temporary



and present need of the Church. The grand stream of revelation, from the date of Moses downward, flowed in the channel of the written record as the only method suitable for permanent keeping, and for the use of future generations. In this respect there is a complete identity in character between the Old and New Testament revelations.

The divine revelations of more ancient and later times are also identical in respect of the truths and doctrines embodied in them. In form these truths may differ, but in substance they are the same. In the measure of truth embodied in the records they may differ, the one being the proper development of the other; but there is no such thing as contradiction or inconsistency, or even substantial variation, to be found among them. There is a singular doctrinal unity that runs through them all during the long period of four thousand years over which the revelations extend, and notwithstanding the diversity of mind of the many human writers who recorded them. The Christianity of the apostles was the religion of the prophets; the gospel preached to the apostolic churches was older than their day, for it was preached before to Abraham; the doctrines of sin by the fall, and salvation by the Seed of the woman, were the old doctrines heard at the gates of paradise when shut upon men, and the new doctrines spoken when the first preachers of Christ went forth in His name, and turned the world upside down with the novelties which they proclaimed. It was a new religion, and yet it was the old; having throughout all its course, since the first promise, that unity of thought which must belong to the truths of one mind when turned to one object, and aiming at the accomplishment of the same end.

There is the diversity that must attach to doctrines taught in different ways, sometimes given in promise, sometimes darkened by prophecy, sometimes embodied in typical act or person, sometimes communicated in the occurrences of history, sometimes embodied in abstract propositions, sometimes enforced by argument, sometimes impressed in practical exhortation. There is the diversity that must be found in doc-

trines not disclosed all at once, and in the systematic order of the truths; but revealed bit by bit, and step by step, in connection with the history of the Church, and in the degree and manner which its passing exigencies or profit demanded. A revelation successively given as successive events called for it, not intended at any one date, until the close, to display all that was to be revealed, but purposely hiding its secrets as well as publishing its discoveries,—a revelation historical, prophetic, dogmatic, hortatory, given at sundry times and in divers manners,—must exhibit a certain amount of diversity in its communications.

But there is a divine unity amidst it all. It is the truth of the same God in the Old Testament and in the New. It is the thought of the one omniscient mind who sees the end from the beginning, and embraces both in one thought. It is the doctrine which, with its many sides touching the human realities of this world, and taking up the countless events of thousands of years of its history, and speaking in the words of many nations and ages, and with the ideas of different periods of time, still has its one source in the bosom of God, and its one object in Christ Jesus. The revelations of all time, running through the Old Testament and New alike, are but one; they suffer no dislocation of thought or truth when Malachi is silent or Matthew speaks; the testimony of Jesus was the spirit of ancient prophecy, and is the spirit of its latest announcements.

And if the substance and truths of the two Testaments are not different, they are due also to the same Divine Spirit; welling out from the same fountain of eternal truth. If the revelation be one, the Revealer is also one. The gifts that belonged to holy men of old, and that enabled them to speak with a wisdom not their own, but coming from above, are uniformly ascribed to the third Person of the glorious Godhead; His presence and His power guaranteeing both the divine truth and supernatural authority of the revelation which they received in order that they might give it to others. The doctrines which they declared were marked out from their own thoughts and beliefs, and also from the thoughts

and beliefs of other men, by this presence of the Spirit with them in the revelation, and clothed with a power to rule the opinions and to claim the submission of all because of their supernatural origin. That human lips did indeed speak words which had divine power to save or to kill, to bind and to loose the soul, was a fact due to the circumstance that the speakers did not speak their own words only, but also the words of the Holy Ghost.

It is not different in gospel times, under that dispensation which has been distinctively called the dispensation of the Spirit. It is the very same Spirit that was upon Moses when he prophesied, or on David when the Lord spake by him and His word was on his tongue, that moved prophets in New Testament times to speak and write as communication was made to them. The oneness of the Revealer supersedes all minor differences, and binds into one grand because supernatural unity, the communications made to the Church in the Old Testament, and those given in the last days. The identity of the divine truth and authority which the Holy Ghost conveyed in the revelations, makes them one; although given at different dates, to different men, for different immediate objects, and in different outward forms. It is impossible, for any real purpose to be served by a supernatural communication of truth, or for any effect that it produces, to distinguish between the messages of God in Old Testament times, and His revelations in the New. They may be distinguished as to date; they may be looked at separately, as the one being the germ, and the other the full development of the germ; the one the beginning, and the other the accomplishment, of God's plan of grace. But as a rule of faith and duty they are alike, being both equally the supernatural communications of the Holy Ghost, and with respect to all the writers equally it being possible to say that the Spirit of the Lord was in their mouth.

In respect of the supernatural character that belongs alike to the revelations,—in respect of the written form and historical medium through which they are given—in respect of

the identity of truth and doctrine taught—in respect of the one Spirit, in the unity of whose influence they had their origin,—the Old Testament and the New manifest no difference at all.

That one event, indeed, among the events of the world, which has separated its history into two divisions, had occurred in the interval between the silence of prophecy in the Old Testament, and the renewal of its word in the New. The Son of God had come to the earth, and had died for sin. His advent formed a crisis in the spiritual history of mankind, from which we date the commencement of a new covenant that found its ratification in Him, and the termination of the old, which, being no more than introductory, was superseded by the new. But even the incarnation and death of the Son of God are as really and intimately connected with that old covenant as with the new, because the difference between them was one belonging to the form and not to the substance of the thing: they were in all but outward matters one and the same. It was the same truth that was embodied in them; it was the same promise of grace in both; it was the same salvation which the one prefigured and the other realized: men lived and died under the old covenant in the saving faith of the same hope in which Christians under the new still live and die. The Son of God has come and gone: all time before His coming, and all the events of time, turned their faces towards Him, and looked forward to Him as their accomplishment; and all time since His departure, and all the events of time, look back to Him as the source from which they have their development. But instead of separating, Christ, standing between, unites the Old Testament and the New in one. He unites them together in a connection which would not otherwise have existed, and which makes the two revelations, like His own people, to be one in Christ Jesus. The ancient dispensation and the later meet in Him, mingling their truths and doctrines—all that they reveal and teach—in His one person and work. It would be very difficult to establish, as between the two, any distinction that would ex-

plain or justify the idea that the one revelation should be inspired and the other should not. They are the same in the supernatural element that gives them their peculiar and distinctive difference from other truth; they are the same in the permanent form which their Divine Author has impressed upon them, as fitted for endurance through all time; they are the same in the doctrine that they teach for the salvation of the soul; they are the same in the presence of the God the Revealer. Do they differ, in that the one is inspired, and the other not inspired, by Him?

They may do so; but looking at the manner and extent of their connection, at the way in which their doctrines are not only identical in substance, but intermingle with and interpenetrate each other, it would not be easy to draw an artificial line of distinction separating the one from the other, as the first inspired and the second not. If to so large an extent their features answer to each other, and the principles and even form of a written revelation are carried over from times of earlier manifestation to the later communications of God, it would require some very manifest and direct assertion to the contrary in the New Testament itself, to justify us in believing that, in respect of inspiration, it was not on the same footing with the Old. It is always a dangerous thing to reason on grounds of *a priori* probability, and to anticipate beforehand what shall be the precise form in which God shall be pleased to present to us His revelation. But the close analogy suggested by the case of the earlier communications of God to the Church can hardly go for nothing in dealing with the argument that has respect to the later.

Everything also in which the one differs from the other,—although the differences are non-essential,—points in the direction of conceding to the later, no less than to the former, the character of a supernatural inspiration. If, in the transition from an oral to a written revelation, the greater development, at the time, of the religious truth to be handed down from one age to another was a cause or reason for the change, we may reasonably argue that the similarly increased development



of the divine revelation, at the date of the New Testament, was a reason for its not being deprived of the privilege which belonged to the former record of its being guarded from intermixture of human error by an inspiration of its page. If a more extensive revelation of truths at all times mysterious, and a greater variety and depth in the teaching of divine things, marked the introduction of the gospel as compared with the Mosaic revelation, it was a reason rather for greater care being taken that the record should be shaped into a form supernaturally pure, and sealed with the assurance of the divine attestation. In proportion to the honour due to Christ, in comparison with earlier prophets, and the responsibility attaching to the belief of His words, as contrasted with the doctrines of the ancient Church, must have been, according to human judgment, the necessity or propriety of the teaching of the New Testament being inspired even perhaps in preference to the Old. The latest and final revelation of God to man, looking both to the number and variety, and to the importance of the truths which it declared, might, in the estimation of man, have been expected to have its record, at least as unmistakeably as in the case of the earlier and less complete communications of God, impressed with the seal of His supernatural authentication. This, indeed, as an *a priori* argument, is not the primary or principal evidence on the subject. But the presumption is so strong, that it casts at least upon those who deny the inspiration of the New Testament, after that of the Old has been established, the responsibility of proving a negative in regard to the former.

Indeed, this argument has been felt to be so strong, that, as an historical fact, it is true that those who admit the force of the evidence in favour of the inspiration of the Old Testament are almost always, perhaps always, found to admit its conclusiveness in respect of the New; while, conversely, the deniers of Old Testament inspiration alone furnish those parties who reject the inspiration of the New.

Among those who accepted the Old Testament volume as

containing not only an authentic record of a supernatural revelation, but also a record supernaturally inspired in the case of all the documents which are comprehended under it, there must have appeared to have grown up, in the course of the many hundred years during which book after book was added to the inspired collection, an actual precedent growing and strengthening as with the increase of it, and constituting a law of the divine procedure in the matter, which men could only with difficulty conceive it to be possible to depart from. A supernatural revelation, and that supernaturally inspired, was the rule, without an exception since the days of Moses downward, which had determined the form of the divine communications not oral or traditionary,—or, in other words, the rule for the written revelations of God, ever since a written revelation existed on the earth. It was a law that must have appeared like an ordinary and permanent one, so far as that can be said of anything supernatural, to the Jewish people, who could look upon the long line of prophetic men who had arisen in the likeness of Moses, and since his day, to receive and record the revelations given to the ancient Church. Inspiration had stamped its features upon the whole of the Old Testament volume; and the lengthened experience of it, in connection with the revelations of past days, must have given the character of an almost improbable innovation to any departure from it in the case of the later.

It could have been only with such a feeling, confirmed by all former experience, that the early Hebrew believers looked upon the New Testament Scriptures. It was in the consciousness of the existence of such a universal belief around them among their countrymen, that the New Testament writers took up their pens to record the revelation given. And if, in recording it, there are fewer formal and dogmatic assertions of their own inspiration by God to be found than what at first sight we might have anticipated, it was doubtless partly owing to the fact that they were not needed; and that the common understanding and belief among the early

Jewish Christians as to the Old Testament revelation being inspired, was universally transferred to the new revelation from heaven that had been granted in the last days. A revelation without inspiration would have been an anomaly scarcely credible in their view; and the existence of a revelation from God once admitted as a fact, must, in the eyes of the primitive Church, have required to carry along with it no formal assertions to ensure the belief that it was inspired.

But it was not only the constant and uniform experience of the past connection between a written revelation and supernatural inspiration that had a tendency to cherish this belief. The series of prophetic men that had long distinguished the ancient Church, from the date of the first introduction of a written revelation down to the cessation of revelation in the person of Malachi, reappeared at the same moment that the revelation was renewed in New Testament times. The apostles were prophets in the same sense that Samuel and his successors were prophets in the Church of God,—that is, were divinely commissioned to receive and declare the supernatural communications of God; although as apostles, and in virtue of their office, they were more than prophets.

But besides the apostles, the office and character of the men who in the ancient Church belonged to the prophetic order were reproduced in the early Christian Church in the persons of those who, not apostles, yet received supernatural revelations from God of divine truth, and were supernaturally commissioned and empowered to proclaim it. During the interval of time, short and transitional, between the resurrection of our Lord and the close of the canon of the New Testament, there were extraordinary offices and gifts conferred, suitable to the condition of the infant Church, and not intended to be permanent. Among these, there are sufficient and distinct notices in Scripture of the existence of an order of men unto whom extraordinary communications of truth were given, and who were endowed to declare or preach

them ; New Testament prophets, like to those of the Old, to whom, in the day of renewed revelation, revelations were entrusted, and along with these an inspiration that enabled them unerringly to minister them to others.

The ‘revelations’ enumerated among the gifts of the apostolic Church were given to this order of men ; and Agabus, mentioned in the Acts of the Apostles, and many others noticed in the New Testament, are examples of a class to whom truth from God was supernaturally revealed,—including truth in reference to the present as well as the future,—and who had warrant and power from Him to proclaim it. For the most part, and chiefly, they are to be regarded as inspired preachers of divine truth, at a time when the record of God’s truth in the New Testament remained incomplete, and what was completed and written was as yet in the hands of few ; so that the early Church stood in need of a ministry of men, divinely gifted and enabled, to declare the mind of God to their fellows. They were, in fact, the Old Testament prophets, who had reappeared again in the times of the gospel, and by their oral messages and proclamation of divine truth supplemented to the early Church the incompleteness or the scarcity of the New Testament writings before the canon was completed.

The coincidence in point of time between the reappearance of the ancient prophets, speaking supernatural revelations by supernatural inspiration, and the renewal of the written revelation from God after an interval, in both cases, of four hundred years, had its deep significance, that could not be overlooked or misinterpreted. In other days, the written revelation and the inspired prophets had been conjoined ; the one was the sign of the other : where the prophet was, there the inspired oral, and oftentimes the inspired written, revelation were ; and where the written revelation was, there invariably was the inspired prophet. The reproduction of the prophetic order in the Church of the early Christians, so abundantly demonstrated by the narrative of the New Testament, must have been recognised, at once, as a sign that the

revelations of God were renewed to His people; and when the written record of what was to be permanently given to the Church, and transmitted to future generations, was issued by prophetic men, it must have carried with it its own evidence that, like the written revelations of prophets of old, it was not merely the human embodiment of a supernatural message from God, but the inspired and supernatural record of it.

Prophets in other days, when they got their message from God, were endowed miraculously to write it in a form that guarded it from mixture or addition of human error. Men who believed in the inspiration of the Old Testament books, believed in this as a fundamental and invariable law of God's written revelation. And when, in gospel times, the prophetic order was restored for a season, and at the same period the written revelations of a former age were renewed, the primitive Church, in receiving at the hands of these men the revelations which have been handed down to us in the New Testament, must have received them as inspired. Nothing but an express declaration to the contrary would have counterbalanced the ancient presumption in favour of the fact.

Is there any express proof, then, in the New Testament, and what, that its writers regarded themselves as successors of the Old Testament prophets, and had served themselves heirs to their endowments of supernatural inspiration?

No one can read the New Testament writings, with the many allusions to the earlier revelations of God, without feeling that the later penmen of Scripture assume to themselves the very same position of authority as the Old, and claim at the very least to be not a whit behind them in all that can constitute a right to be heard and believed in the name of God. The impression, indeed, left upon the reader of the later Scriptures is, that the words of apostles, and what they tell of Christ, are, if possible, more necessary to be believed than the teaching of earlier prophets. To despise Moses' words or commandments was a sin worthy to be punished by the judge; but to despise the commandments of Christ, as these are recorded



by the men who have written His life, or taught His doctrine, or interpreted His words, is a sin more heinous still. It may be admitted, indeed, that the superior importance of the truths taught by Christ, and not the superior certainty of the record of them, is the explanation to be given of the greater responsibility incurred by those who reject His words. But it cannot be admitted that such an emphatic warning of the deeper condemnation waiting upon the deniers of Christ's words is consistent with the idea that, in comparison with the teaching of the Old Testament, they possess a less measure of certainty, or of that assurance of certainty, which supernatural inspiration alone can supply. The peculiar aggravation of the sin of unbelief, in reference to our Saviour's words, as it is represented in the New Testament, is not consistent with the notion that it is not inspired, while the earlier record is.

But there is no want of express Scripture assertions as to the footing of equality on which the Old and the New Testament writings are to be regarded as resting.

In the remarkable allusion to the writings of Paul found in the second Epistle of Peter, we have direct and conclusive evidence of the fact that, in its claims to be believed as the inspired word of God, the New Testament stands on the same level as the Old. The familiar and well-recognised term which, according to New Testament usage, is employed in perhaps every other case to denote the Old Testament writings, is here applied to them, and also to the epistles of Paul: 'As our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things: in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction.'<sup>1</sup> It is more than probable that, under the name 'other Scriptures,' is to be included all the writings of the New Testament that had been published and circulated in the early Church prior to the date of Peter's

<sup>1</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 16.

second epistle; the reference to these exhibiting an example of the process by which the word, originally confined in its application to the Old Testament, came to be extended, in post-apostolic usage, to all writings, like the Old Testament, given and inspired by God. But this construction of the apostle's language is by no means necessary to the argument. It is enough that we have here an unquestionable assertion of the equal authority of the epistles of Paul with the Hebrew canon,—both being alike entitled to the name of Scripture, and both infallible and authoritative, whatever misinterpretations they might be subjected to at the hands of unlearned and unstable men.

To much the same effect of proving the co-ordinate authority and supernatural truth equally of the Old Testament and the New, we have another passage in this same chapter: 'This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance; that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour.'<sup>1</sup> Here the apostle purposely conjoins the teaching of the Old Testament and the lessons of the New as equally binding on the conscience and obedience, and equally available for confirmation of doctrine or inculcation of duty. It is utterly impossible that he could have done this, if there existed between the two the essential distinction that one was supernaturally inspired and the other not. Writing to Hebrew Christians, who believed that 'the words of the holy prophets' were spoken by inspiration of the Spirit, Peter intentionally joins to these 'the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour,' as having the same authority and inspiration.

To such direct testimonies of Scripture to the equal honour and place of the Old Testament and the New, there naturally falls to be added a consideration of much weight in the argument. The mission of apostles was in itself superior to that of prophets under the former economy; and it is hardly pos-

<sup>1</sup> 2 Pet. iii. 1.

sible to conceive that, with a higher standing officially in the Church, their teaching could have been of inferior authority, or destitute of any one claim to regard which that of the Old Testament prophets enjoyed.

Amidst the extraordinary offices that were conferred on the early Church as her endowment, there were none that took place beside the office of the apostle as equal in authority or rank ; and the gifts given him to exercise were far richer and higher than those that belonged to any other office-bearer. Prophets are mentioned second in the list of office-bearers which the ascension of Christ conferred on the primitive Church, and lower both in authority and honour than apostles, who are spoken of first. These prophets of the New Testament times did indeed come in the stead of the men of the prophetic order under the old dispensation, being supernaturally visited by God, as they were, with revelations of His mind, both predictive and declaratory, and employed until the canon of the New Testament was closed, and all that was necessary for the future instruction of the Church was recorded there in a permanent form. But from many passages of Scripture it is apparent that they took rank among the extraordinary office-bearers of the Christian Church, as inferior to the apostles, who enjoyed a pre-eminence in their mission and authority above prophets whether of the Old Testament or the New. There cannot be two degrees of certainty in the inspiration of any set of men ; and therefore we cannot argue from the pre-eminence of the apostolic office, that the words of the men who discharged its duties had a superior assurance in them to those of other inspired men. But giving due weight to this consideration, it would be impossible to argue that the written word of prophets in Old Testament times was inspired, while that of apostles in the gospel day was not ; or even that the inspiration of the New Testament prophets in their oral teaching may be admitted, while that of apostles in the written communications is denied.

But beyond the explicit assertions of Scripture as to the equal and co-ordinate authority of the earlier and later books,

and over and above any evidence to be derived from the comparative superiority of the main authors of the New Testament over the prophets of the Old, there is no one who will carefully examine the relations of the two, and the blending of the teaching of the one with the teaching of the other, that can need any other argument to satisfy him that they are equally inspired, if any of them is inspired at all. The manner in which the earlier and later books are conjoined in their teaching, and the doctrines of the one intermingled with the truths of the other, furnishes a complete demonstration that, for all the purposes of a revelation, they are regarded by the New Testament writers as one and not two authorities, which could be separated, and estimated at different values.

In the case of the many quotations from the Old Testament in the New, and the extensive series of references from the one to the other, it would be utterly impossible in many passages to draw a line of distinction between what the sacred penman declares upon his own authority, and what he declares on the authority of the earlier Scriptures that he cites or alludes to; or to say what are the doctrines and facts which rest for their evidence on the one foundation, or what are based upon the other, or yet again on both conjointly. So intimately blended together in the thoughts and writings of the New Testament authors are the two sources of knowledge from which they draw their statements, whether it be the supernatural revelations they personally received, or the revelations equally supernatural recorded in the Hebrew canon, that they never pretend to distinguish between them as respects the authority to be attributed to each, as if one were more certain than the other, or claimed to receive a larger measure of submission. If it is some doctrinal truth that is recommended to the belief of those whom the apostles address in their epistles, it matters not whether it is asserted upon their own authority, or on the authority of the earlier records which they quote. If it be some duty to be enjoined, it is equally entitled to bind the conscience and obedience,

whether it is one taught by former Scriptures or announced for the first time by themselves. Their use of Old Testament statements and language is that of men who do not place them, in respect of authority or truth, above their own words or beneath their own words, but who make no distinction whatever between them, and who employ either indiscriminately, as if there could be no difference made for the purposes to which they are applied, of establishing doctrine or inculcating duty. This general fact is so plainly impressed upon the face of the New Testament, that it is impossible to dispute it; and no explanation can be given of it except this, that the apostles themselves knew of no difference in point of authority and inspiration between their own writings and those of earlier prophets.

If the abundant and varied evidence already adduced for the inspiration of the Old Testament be accepted as conclusive, it is impossible to separate between it and the question of the inspiration of the New. The two collections of writings are identical in respect of all that marks them as revelations from God; in their supernatural character—in their written and historical form—in their doctrinal teaching—in the presence of the Spirit of God in them as the one Revealer. Even their differences, the one being the fuller development and sequel to the other, contribute to their connection, and suggest an argument for the same inspiration as belonging to both. The reappearance in the gospel day of the same order of supernatural men as received and recorded the earlier revelations of God, links together in closer union the former and the later record. The express declarations of Scripture on the point can leave no doubt that, if the Old Testament is given by inspiration, the New is of equal and co-ordinate authority. The higher and larger commission of the apostles, who form the chief writers of the New Testament, forbid us to believe that their writings are inferior in authority to those of the ancient prophets; while the blending of the truths and teaching of the two in the apostolic writings permits no possibility of separating between them.



If the Old Testament be an inspired volume, so must be the New.

II. But apart altogether from its connection with the earlier collection of books embodied in the Hebrew canon, the New Testament furnishes an independent body of evidence for its own inspiration.

With two exceptions, its authors were all apostolic men, who stood in a very peculiar relation to our Lord, were endowed with extraordinary powers suited to the extraordinary office to which they were in an early period of our Saviour's ministry called, and to whom corresponding promises of supernatural grace were given. The evangelists Mark and Luke, the only writers of the New Testament not apostles, were, according to the ancient sense of the word, prophets; that is, men to whom were committed supernatural revelations, and who were commissioned by God to declare or write them for the benefit of others. This much must be conceded on both sides of this debate, unless we are to open up the wider question belonging to another department of the apologetic argument, of whether or not the New Testament writers truly recorded a communication miraculously given to them by God. But the other authors of the New Testament writings were more than prophets. They were apostles, or men 'sent' by Christ. They received the name in virtue of the office to which they were appointed; and the name is significant of the office and of its functions.

One remarkable peculiarity of the Gospel by John, is the frequent language, and the varied form of language, in which Christ speaks of Himself as the Apostle, or *the sent* of God. 'As the living Father hath sent Me;' 'I am from Him, and He hath sent Me;' 'A little while, and I go to Him that sent Me;' 'Neither came I of Myself, but He sent Me;' 'Whom the Father hath sanctified and sent into the world;' 'That they may believe that Thou hast sent Me;' 'Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent;' 'And they have believed that Thou didst send Me;' 'That the world may

know that Thou hast sent Me;’ ‘And they have known that Thou hast sent Me.’ He seems to dwell upon the word, and to reiterate it, as if it called to His mind the work that the Father had given Him to do.

But it is still more remarkable, that when He selected and set apart certain men to bear the message of His love to sinners, to go forth as His ambassadors to the world, and to represent Him on earth after His departure, He took His own name, which He Himself had so often had upon His lips, as descriptive of His office, and named it upon them, that they might be baptized into His likeness, and inaugurated into a work like His own. Of His disciples ‘He chose twelve, whom also He named apostles.’ The ‘sent’ of the Father, and the ‘sent’ of Christ; the ‘Apostle’ of God, and the ‘apostles’ of the Son, had a likeness, even as the heavenly may have its likeness in the earthly. The office of the one had its resembling parallel in the office of the other. And as if to warrant us to use such language, and to give encouragement in following out the idea, our Saviour, in one of His last interviews with the twelve after His resurrection, recalls the name, and enforces His commission to them by means of the analogy which it suggested, when He said, ‘As My Father hath sent Me, so send I you.’

The office of Christ, like His own nature, was incommunicable; none could stand where He stood. But yet in some sense, however inferior it might be, when He sent forth His twelve, whom He called apostles, in giving them such a name, He intimated His will, that after His departure His own apostleship should be continued for a time on earth, and that they should be to Him what He had been to the Father. In what sense the apostles went forth equipped with His powers and fitted to speak and act as His representatives in the world, can only be understood by a careful consideration of those promises of supernatural grace which He bestowed, and of the actual history of the fulfilment of them in their experience. The very name that they carried with them as the sent of Him who was the sent of God, was a promise of gifts and grace more than man’s.

It were an error on one extreme, similar to the error of the Church of Rome, to assert that the one incommunicable office which, as Mediator between God and man, the Son only could hold, and the divine functions which, as Mediator, belonged to Him to discharge, could be delegated to mortal men as His successors on earth. But it would be an error on the other extreme, to assert that when the Son of God gave to the twelve that name, which He Himself had loved to bear on earth, as descriptive of the commission from the Father which He came to discharge, He did not make promise to them of gifts and powers, however much lower in degree, yet similar in character, to what He Himself possessed. In the very image of that commission which He took not to Himself, but received from His Father, He gave them commission to speak and act on His behalf : their apostleship was to be grounded upon His, and corresponding to it ; they were to go forth from Him to the world in a manner and order resembling that in which He went forth from Him who had appointed Him ; and after His departure from the earth, and His own apostleship was ended, they were to remain behind, the sent of Christ, as Christ was the sent of God.

In the circumstances of their original appointment by our Lord, we witness the pledge for the supernatural powers that were to be ministered by the apostles. It was after a long night spent in prayer alone with God, that their Lord called unto Him the twelve, and ordained them to office as His immediate companions during His life, and His recognised representatives after His departure ; their appointment being expressly in His name to preach His word, to heal the sick, to cast out devils, to raise the dead ; and their investiture with office endowing them with extraordinary powers adequate to these objects. In the fulness of the divine gifts with which they were personally endowed, they felt no sort of restraint or limitation in the discharge of these functions ; for they were commanded freely to give as they themselves had freely received. Along with the powers for such work, they had His authority vested in them to enter into every human dwelling

in His name, being told with respect to any who should challenge their right, or set at nought their word, that it should be more tolerable for Sodom and Gomorrha than for them. And to unite into one divine union the powers and authority they exercised with the warrant of God Himself, our Lord traced up through Himself the commission they had received to His Father in heaven : ‘ He that receiveth you, receiveth Me ; and he that receiveth Me, receiveth Him that sent Me.’

Shortly after their ordination to this supernatural calling, they were sent forth to test their powers in the mission they undertook at their Master’s command to the towns and cities of Judea. In the personal attendance on our Lord which the apostles had given, witnessing His miracles and listening to His words, they had served an apprenticeship to their own official life, and had grown up into an understanding and sympathy with the divine model, after whose likeness they themselves were to speak and act in after times. The exercise of their extraordinary ministry for a time under their Master’s eye, and the practice of their calling upon occasions, completed their training for future life, qualifying them to appear as His representatives in all their official speech and conduct. And the remarkable series of promises which gave them assurance that these miraculous endowments for speaking and acting as delegates for Him of whom they were sent, were not temporary or occasional gifts, but to remain with them uninterruptedly for all the requirements and emergencies of their apostleship, completed their equipment for permanent work. The promises made to them by our Lord on various occasions, referred not only to the occasional missions on which they were sent during His lifetime, but also to the whole of their professional life ; and embraced all that was necessary for the right discharge of their duties, or for meeting the calls made upon them in the exigencies of their apostolic office.

These promises have been recorded by all the evangelists more or less. In the Gospel by Matthew the apostles are forewarned both of the difficulties and the extraordinary helps

that would meet them in their apostolic work: 'They will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; and ye shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak; for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.'<sup>1</sup> In the narrative of Mark, our Lord in like manner gives effectual promise of supernatural gifts to meet the emergencies of their apostolic life: 'When they shall lead you, and deliver you up, take no thought beforehand what ye shall speak, neither do ye premeditate; but whatsoever shall be given you in that hour, that speak ye: for it is not ye that speak, but the Holy Ghost.'<sup>2</sup> The evangelist Luke speaks of the same perils and the same promises: 'But before all these, they shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for My name's sake. And it shall turn to you for a testimony. Settle it therefore in your hearts, not to meditate before what ye shall answer: for I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gainsay or resist.'<sup>3</sup>

Now, in the first place, it is plain that if 'the sent' of Christ were, like Christ Himself, when He was 'sent' by the Father, to be exposed to opposition and danger from the world to whom they were commissioned, they were like Him also to be upheld by supernatural strength, and by the presence of Him who appointed them, so that they should be able to prevail. In whatever sense the assurance of the divine presence with believers is to be interpreted equally with respect to all in every age, it had a peculiar meaning when spoken in connection with promises like these. No one can read them without being satisfied that it is the supernatural gifts of the Spirit of God that are here referred to. It was part of the likeness which the men whom He named apostles

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 17-20.      <sup>2</sup> Mark xiii. 11.      <sup>3</sup> Luke xxi. 12-15.



were to bear to their Master, that like Him they were to be rejected and persecuted by men, but also that, like Him, they were to share, in their own measure, and in proportion to the exigencies of their office, in the miraculous power of that same Spirit which dwelt in Him without measure.

And, in the second place, it is no less plain that a very special form in which the supernatural aids of the Holy Ghost were to be vouchsafed, was to be in the way of clothing their tongue with wisdom and truth not their own, but divine. They were to be brought face to face with the civil and ecclesiastical rulers, before kings and synagogues, for Christ's sake, and in defence of His gospel. But in such an exigency the defence was not to be entrusted to their lips, nor perilled upon their ignorance or wisdom : they were not in that hour to fall back upon their skill after the best and fullest premeditation ; and the reason assigned is, that in what they might require to say, it would not be their tongue that spake, but the Holy Ghost speaking in them. Here, too, the likeness to their Master was to be realized in them in their future apostolic life. As He spake not His own words, but the words of His Father who sent Him, so they were not to give forth their own utterances, but as the Spirit, who proceedeth from the Apostle who sent them, was to enable them. The promise, with its assurance of supernatural inspiration, covered the whole occasions and demands of their future official life. It would be worse than folly to limit it to the oral, and to exclude the written, words of apostles.

But it is more especially in the Gospel by John that we have the fullest record of the remarkable promises made by Christ to His disciples. It was on the eve of His own departure. It was after He had told them that He was about to go away, and when they felt that they were more than orphans in the prospect. It was when, to support their hearts, He spoke of the coming of the Spirit, to compensate by His advent for His own removal, and assured them that the second Comforter should be better than the first. His language embraces both the ordinary and extraordinary in-

fluences of the Spirit of God, as included under the promises : 'I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another Comforter, that He may abide with you for ever ; even the Spirit of truth ; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him : but ye know Him ; for He dwelleth with you, and shall be in you. I will not leave you comfortless ; I will come to you.' 'These things have I spoken unto you, being yet present with you. But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you.'<sup>1</sup> 'Nevertheless, I tell you the truth ; It is expedient for you that I go away : for, if I go not away, the Comforter will not come unto you ; but if I depart, I will send Him unto you.' 'I have yet many things to tell you, but ye cannot bear them now. Howbeit, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth : for He shall not speak of Himself ; but whatsoever He shall hear, that shall He speak : and He will show you things to come. He shall glorify Me : for He shall receive of Mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father hath are Mine : therefore said I, He shall take of Mine, and shall show it unto you.'<sup>2</sup>

There are various points to be especially marked in these promises of our Lord to His disciples.

In the first place, the Spirit that was promised to them to compensate for the Saviour's own departure, is especially and twice over spoken of as the Spirit of *truth*, evidently referring to His peculiar province as the Revealer and Inspirer. His presence might confer on them, as we know it actually did, the supernatural gifts of miracles and tongues, so that apostles were distinguished above other men by the possession of such superhuman endowments ; and they themselves are spoken of in Scripture language as the signs of an apostle. But not excluding these wonders and mighty deeds, the promise specially points to gifts of revelation and inspiration, conferred by the Spirit in His character of the Spirit of truth.

<sup>1</sup> John xiv. 16, etc.

<sup>2</sup> John xvi. 7, 12-15.

Secondly, we are told that the Spirit was ‘to bring to the remembrance of the apostles all things whatsoever Christ had said unto them,’ during the long period of their personal intercourse with Him on earth. In such a case, the knowledge which they had of His doctrines, derived from His own lips and treasured up in their memory, was not sufficient. The failures of memory must be corrected by the supernatural revelation again of all, that they had been taught by our Lord Himself of divine truth, and which they might more or less perfectly remember, before they could be fitted, either orally or by writing, to be the teachers of others. It was not enough that the truths to be communicated, through their instrumentality to their fellow-men, were truths which they had previously learned themselves, and might recover again by falling back upon their own remembrances of what they had heard, and instituting a comparison of their own recollections with the recollections of their fellow-disciples. The Spirit of God was Himself to present afresh the truth to their mind, not in the light or relations, perfect or imperfect, in which they had at first understood or subsequently remembered it, but in the light and relations in which it could be truly apprehended, because actually seen and understood by God.

Thirdly, the Spirit, in addition to recalling truth to their remembrance, was ‘to teach them all things,’ and ‘to guide them into all truth.’ It is plain that this promises something over and above the recalling to mind and presenting anew to the apostles what they had known before from Christ’s personal instructions. The illumination of their own minds in the saving knowledge of divine truth, is doubtless included in the assurance ; but it cannot be interpreted as limited to this. The ‘guidance into all truth’ is connected by our Lord with the intimation that ‘He had many things to say unto them, which they,’ in the condition of partial unbelief or incapacity to understand it, ‘were not able at the moment to bear ;’ and which further familiarity with the gospel and the teaching of future events would alone enable them to comprehend.

The revelation of divine truth intended for the future Church was left by our Lord incomplete, chiefly because the greatest of these truths, and the one that was to throw light upon all the rest,—His own death for the salvation of sinners,—was not yet realized as a fact; and partly because the state of preparedness of mind on the part of the apostles was not such as to enable them to receive the complete revelation, so as to understand it themselves or to open up its mysteries to others. In these circumstances, the work of supplementing what was wanting in the teaching of our Lord to His disciples during His lifetime was committed to the Spirit of truth, who was to come at His departure. He was to lead the disciples into all the truth, and to fill up what was behind in the measure of the divine revelations. He was not only to recall to their memory all they had heard before, but to add to it in various ways. He was to open up the significance of things formerly known and perfectly remembered, by showing their relations to Christ and His death; and with reference to much that they had never heard, and could not anticipate or discover, He was to guide them to new knowledge connected with the mysteries of God. The two-fold process of presenting afresh or recalling remembered and old truths, and of unveiling truths altogether new, was to be the work of the Spirit in His supernatural ministry to the apostles; and both equally necessary for their office.

Fourthly, the Spirit of truth promised to the apostles was to ‘show them things to come,’ thereby filling up the measure of the prophetic office, which had to do with revelations of future things as well as of present truth, and comprehended both predictive and declarative prophecy. This, too, was necessary for the work of the apostolic office, as we see in the instance of not a few of their writings, and as was manifested especially in the example of the prophetic order in the Old Testament Church. In showing the apostles what was to come to pass when necessary either in the conduct of the affairs of the Christian society of which they were the founders and governors, or in the record of prophecy furnished for the

instruction of future ages, the Spirit of God was completing the catalogue of supernatural gifts appropriate to their official character and work.

Fifthly, these extraordinary gifts of the Divine Spirit were not to be restricted in the case of apostolic men to some trying occasions of duty, or some great crisis in the history of the Church. When brought before kings and synagogues, and called upon to answer for their Master and themselves, the apostles were not to premeditate, but to trust themselves and their cause to the inspired answer that would be given upon their lips. But in so far as regards the apostles personally, this was a permanent endowment, available not indeed at all times, nor at any time, or for any object but their official duty, but remaining with them continually for apostolic purposes. When these purposes were accomplished, and the Church of Christ, nursed in its infancy by supernatural privileges, had outgrown the need of them, and miracle and revelation and inspiration were no longer required to usher in a new dispensation, or to complete the record of God's will to mankind, they ceased from the earth.

The apostolic office came to an end with those who first enjoyed it. The supernatural gifts of the Spirit of God that once were manifested without measure in the One sent by the Father, and that were continued for a season, and in inferior degree, in those sent by Him, were no longer necessary for the existence, or conducive to the welfare, of the Church of God when it had been firmly established, and had received into its hands the completed and sealed canon. The divine word in that record, and the Divine Spirit with its gracious presence in the Church, were enough for its permanent necessities and profit, without the aid of those supernatural gifts which had illustrated and shed a glory around its early years. The apostles died, or lived only in the saving word which they had written with inspired pens, and through which, being dead, they yet speak to us. But while they remained, and while their presence was necessary for the infant Church, they had the assurance, that for every



purpose or duty belonging to the apostolic office, and for all the age during which it lasted, they were in this too to be likened to their Master; and the Spirit of truth that in infinite measure dwelt in Christ according to Christ's infinite nature, was, with a plenitude corresponding to their nature and to the duties given them to do, to abide with them for ever.

Such promises as these given by Christ to His apostles for the performance of the duties of their office, had we nothing else, would themselves constitute evidence conclusive that they enjoyed, in all that they did or said as the delegates of their Master after His departure, the supernatural aids of the Spirit, suited to the kind of duty or work they had to perform for Him, and appropriate to the emergency and necessities of the infant Church.

If it was needful to attest by supernatural attestation the truth of their Lord's doctrine among unconverted nations, they were enabled, where they went, to confirm the word that they preached by signs following. If it was expedient to establish the reality of their own commission as messengers sent from God, the signs of an apostle were at their command to demonstrate it in the face of gainsayers. If, in the prosecution of their apostolic labours, they journeyed to people of a strange language to preach the gospel, they were enabled by the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit to speak with tongues as necessity demanded. If the measure of divine revelation, left incomplete before the death of Christ, had to be filled up for the instruction of the Church in after ages, they were empowered by new communications from on high to supplement the former. If a word had to be spoken in season for the conviction and conversion of sinners, or for the building up of believers in the infallible truth of Jesus, they were enabled to supply it as the Spirit gave them utterance. If called to defend their cause before kings and governors, those men sent by Him who sent the Spirit in His extraordinary and plenary gifts to the early Church, found that it was given them in that hour what they should say. The promises vouchsafed to them by their Lord on the eve of His

departure from the world, for the purpose of fitting them for the duties given them to do, would have failed of their accomplishment, if in measure and in character the extraordinary assistance promised had not been commensurate and corresponding to the work to be done. The promise of the Spirit in His supernatural grace is to be interpreted in connection with the objects for which it was given. It can be understood aright only when measured and explained by the office and the work of an apostle.

What was that work? Let us assume nothing more than the two facts of a supernatural revelation from God contained in the New Testament Scriptures, and the historical credibility of the record of it; and taught by these, let us inquire and understand what was the work of an apostle, for the adequate performance of which these promises were given, and by the nature and extent of which these promises of spiritual assistance must be interpreted.

During that brief but important interval of time between the first calling of the apostles and their removal by death, we have the life and history of our Lord recorded, the revelations of divine truth supplemented and completed, and the foundations of the Christian Church laid, and its superstructure reared and finished. In all these the apostles were the chief and presiding agents, appointed for the very purpose, and doing the work with no other help than the help of Christ's promise fulfilled in their behalf. The whole period was a transition one, not again to occur in the history of the Christian Church, and requiring extraordinary powers and commission on the part of the apostles suited to the crisis, but not designed or destined to outlive it. It was expedient that Christ should go away before either His doctrine or the visible embodiment of His doctrine in the outward form of the Church could be completed. The apostles were left behind as His instruments and delegates to accomplish the work. In order to do so, endowments not needed in the normal condition of the Christian society were vested in them; and the miraculous outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost

clothed them at once with supernatural power and supernatural inspiration. The age of miracle and the age of inspiration were coincident, and both necessary in the infant condition of the Christian society. The office and work of an apostle implied the existence of both.

As instruments in the hand of Christ for carrying on and completing the work which He left unfinished when He ascended, the apostles are mainly to be viewed in three lights. They were to be the historians of His life, the interpreters and teachers of His doctrine, and the founders and administrators of His kingdom. The Saviour's promise had respect to all these three characters in which the apostles were His sent and selected instruments. It is to be interpreted and measured by the supernatural work which they had to do in these respects.

First, the apostles were to be the historians of our Lord's life. Two out of the four evangelical narratives are actually written by their pens, and the other two are written by men themselves prophets, and taught by apostles; the one being the convert of Peter, and his son in the faith, and the other the companion and fellow-labourer of Paul. It was necessary that the life and history of our Lord during His earthly sojourn should find its place in the revelation of God, as forming itself the chief and most important part of the doctrine or faith taught in His name. It is one of the peculiarities of Christianity, that it has been embodied from the beginning in human history, and has taught its truth through the medium of example and fact rather than of abstract and dogmatic propositions. It is especially so in connection with its last and greatest truths. The incarnation, life, obedience, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Son of God in man's nature, written on the page of human history, are the sum and substance, the very mysteries, of Christian faith; and the narrative of these facts is the record of the truth which the Christian has to believe.

In this respect the biography of Christ is like to none other that ever was written. The subject of it is a divine person

manifested in the flesh, the narrative of whose earthly life is unlike that of any other life ever recorded for the instruction and benefit of other men and ages. His life was the divine model of what human life should be, the minutest action in His daily walk having a significance superhuman, and furnishing an authoritative example of what men in similar circumstances should follow after. His words, as He spake to His disciples in private, or proclaimed the gospel of life to the multitude by the shore of the sea of Galilee, were pregnant with supernatural truth, and even the lightest of them formed in a sense an article of faith. His person was that manifestation of the unseen and unsearchable God which alone, of all the revelations of the Infinite that have been given, can be understood by man; and the opening of His lips in the simplest utterance that He spake to a child, carried with it a warrant or an obligation to believe which made unbelief to be a sin.

The biography of the Son of God, declaring aright what He was, and narrating truly what He said and did, could not have been written except by that same Spirit who was from the beginning one with Him in nature, and therefore adequately understood His mind, His thoughts, His words, and His life. Unless supernaturally lifted up to the level of the subject, no human historian could have so entered into the ideas and feelings and history of that divine Man, as to have written the narrative of His life with any understanding of it adequate or true. The real Biographer must Himself have been divine, to be able to depict the image of Him who was the image of the Father, and to impress it on the page of Scripture as a likeness for ever.

To enable them to accomplish this task, among others, the promise of the Spirit in His supernatural influences was given to the apostles; and the promise itself, viewed in the extent and fulness of its language as it was spoken by our Lord, would alone have been evidence that the divine idea was joined to the human in the biographies written of Him. But that evidence appears, if need be, stronger still when we

interpret the promise by the nature of the work to be done, and the actual histories that have been recorded of the Son of God. John, the last of the historians, speaks of the record that he wrote of the God-man as a record that had life and death in it to those who received and rejected it; and testifies at the close to its infallible truth, in a manner that nothing but the presence of the infallible Spirit in the history can explain: 'Many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through His name.' 'This is the disciple which testifieth of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true.'<sup>1</sup>

Secondly, the apostles were to be the interpreters of their Master's doctrine, and teachers of His faith, in such a sense that their word should pass for His word, and the truth taught by them be, equally with His teaching, sufficient to rule the belief and to warrant the faith of Christians. The central fact of Christianity, the fact of the death and resurrection of the Son of God, was a truth not realized in actual occurrence during the time that their Master had intercourse with them day by day, teaching in public and explaining to His disciples the teaching in private. He spoke of it only by anticipation and under reserve, so long as it was in the future; both because it was a future event, and also because they could not at the time understand the import of the truth, either in itself or in its relations to the whole system of Christian doctrine. The sorrow of His departure was aggravated by the fact that so much remained untold of all the truths He had to communicate, and which it was necessary both for them and for the Christian Church to receive. But the second Comforter was, in this respect, to be better than the first. The new revelations given them by the Spirit opened up their own minds to the apprehension of the whole truth of God in the matter of salvation, which had only in part been revealed

<sup>1</sup> John xx. 30, xxi. 24.



before, and constituted them the fitting delegates of their absent Lord to give forth in His name these revelations to others. He Himself had come into the world the antitype of all the prophets before, infallibly endowed by the infiniteness of the Spirit to declare to men the will of the Father; and when He ascended up on high and left the revelation incomplete, the apostles, in the likeness of Him who was the Apostle of the Father, and endowed according to their capacity with the same Spirit, entered into His work and carried it through to an end. 'As My Father hath sent Me, so send I you.' 'Go teach all nations; and, lo, I am with you always unto the end of the world.' 'Ye shall receive power after the Holy Ghost is come upon you; and ye shall be witnesses unto Me, both in Jerusalem and in all Judea and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.'

Such a mission to go forth to the world the authorized interpreters of their Master's truth, not only in the way of writing what they had learned from His own lips during the days of His flesh, but also of adding to it doctrine not at all, or only partially, taught before, and doctrine to be received as equally true and authoritative with His own words, was one which necessarily implied Christ's own presence with them by His Spirit, in extraordinary revelation and inspiration alike. Nothing but the supernatural inhabitation of the same Divine Spirit that was in the Master could make their doctrine to be His truth, and their teaching to be equally infallible and authoritative with His. The promise of the Spirit to lead them into all truth, in those matters which the Lord was not able to make known before He went away, put them, in respect of the certainty and authority of their apostolic words, on the same footing with Himself.

And answering to the promise was the fulfilment, as we witness it, both in the language and acts subsequently of the apostles. In preaching and in writing, to whomsoever they addressed themselves, and wherever they went, they claimed to be accounted the representatives of their Lord in a sense in which none others ever were; in their official character

they never themselves made any distinction, and would allow of none others making any distinction, between their words and His; and whenever their apostleship was acknowledged, such supereminent pretensions were uniformly allowed without challenge. Describing beforehand the standing and prerogatives of their office, the Saviour had told them, that he that heareth you heareth Me, and he that despiseth you despiseth Him that sent you. And asserting and magnifying his office afterward, Paul, in the very spirit if not in the language of the promise, declared to the false teachers at Corinth, 'If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.

But stronger, indeed, than any individual assertions, however strong, of the infallible truth and divine authority of all that they did or said as apostles, is the silent assertion on their part of a right, in all that concerned saving knowledge, to speak for Christ, as confessing no inequality between His teaching and theirs. In matters of eternal truth, their words, no less than those of their Master, were the savour of life unto life or death unto death. In matters of sin and duty, what they said, like what He said, could bind and loose the human conscience. The truth that they uttered, like His own, uttered by His divine lips, could save the soul alive. And all this was the case just because what they said was not their own, but His—the Spirit that was His speaking in them.

Thirdly, there was another capacity still in which the apostles appeared in the primitive Church as the representatives of their Master, and acting with His delegated powers. As the historians of His life and the teachers of His faith, they were invested with His infallible truth, so that all that they chronicled or taught was as an article of faith to the Church. But they were clothed also with His divine authority, when, with His commission in their hand, they went throughout every country and city as the founders and administrators of His visible kingdom.

During the period of our Lord's personal ministry, the dis-

ciples whom He made were not formally or publicly separated from that spiritual society which had received its impress and features from the Mosaic economy. Our Saviour was Himself a member of the Jewish Church, and did not call upon His followers to separate themselves from that communion, or to constitute themselves into a new fellowship, until after His death. The Christian Church, founded upon the doctrine of the resurrection, could not be formally inaugurated until after that event; as it is only subsequently to that date that we read of the existence of regular worshipping assemblies of Christ's disciples, separated from the Jewish. It is a mistake, then, to look for anything, at an earlier time, like the platform or formal polity of the Christian society. There were principles, indeed, embodied in the Jewish Church more or less applicable to the Christian; but, in so far as regards its distinctive government, worship, and discipline, the apostles, as the representatives of their ascended Lord, were entrusted with the commission to organize and administer it. For such a purpose, the gifts, extraordinary and infallible, of the Spirit were indispensable.

It is not necessary to open up the question of the extent to which the arrangements and polity of the Christian society, as instituted at first, are of divine obligation upon subsequent times. Few or none, perhaps, will deny that, apart from details more or less, there are certain fundamental principles of divine authority that distinguish the Christian society, in its outward order, from other societies; and certain standing ordinances and permanent appointments connected with it, which owe their origin to God, and not to the discretion of man. A society gathered together in consequence of the positive appointment of God, and whose proceedings are to be regulated by His word,—a Church that has the presence of the indwelling Spirit within, and the headship of the Son reigning over it,—can hardly be a society the arrangements of which, like those of any voluntary association, can be fixed and ordered by men. In unfolding the general principles and laws of Christ's kingdom,—in set-

ting up its worship and sacraments, its government and discipline,—the apostles needed a wisdom and authority beyond their own. Built upon the foundation of apostles and prophets, the Church rested securely on its foundation, because in this matter they received the commission, and were guided by the infallible inspiration, of their Divine Lord.

It is true that the apostolic arrangements in the early Church were to some extent dictated by a regard to the circumstances of the Church at that date; and many of them were peculiar, and not intended to apply to churches in other circumstances and after times. These were provisions and appointments of the infant Church, temporary and not permanent, suited to the occasions and exigencies of infancy, and not destined to outlive it. But along with these, and underlying them, there were fundamental principles and arrangements, of the essence of a Christian Church, and divinely ordained for all churches, to organize and regulate which, demanded more than a wisdom equal to the passing time or crisis. In both kinds of arrangements, whether those appropriate and restricted to the temporary occasions, or those of wider aim, and having respect to all circumstances and to future ages of the Christian society, the apostles exercised a power and wielded a commission throughout the whole churches of the primitive age which nothing short of a divine authority and unerring instruction could explain.

In the prospect of the future Church, to be founded on His own death and resurrection, Christ had given to His apostles the keys of the kingdom of heaven, telling them that whatsoever they bound on earth should be bound in heaven, and whatsoever they loosed on earth should be loosed in heaven. Acting on the general authority thus committed to them, but sustained and guided by the supernatural presence and operation of the Spirit promised, they authoritatively dictated, in every city where their converts were gathered, the constitution and arrangements of the Christian society; they became not only the founders, but the rulers, of the spiritual community, wherever its branches extended, and even where

they themselves were not resident as members ; they ordered and overruled the decisions of local parties, in matters affecting local interests, without challenge or appeal ; being absent, they delivered judgment on offenders and churches, consigning to Satan or restoring to fellowship according to their will ; they exercised a right to determine controversies as to worship and government, as much as in respect of doctrine ; and their authority in the outward matters of the primitive Church was accepted as equally absolute and infallible as their authority in its dogmatic teaching. With the exception of the false teachers and schismatics, the absolute and unchallengeable authority of the apostolic office in government, worship, and discipline throughout the universal Church, was an established truth, admitting of no doubt. Their claim to be regarded as the infallible guides and divinely authorized rulers of the Christian society was allowed on all hands by Christians.

In every department, then, of apostolic duty, and in every capacity in which their office and prerogatives called upon them to speak or act in the primitive Church, the evidence both from the previous promises given, and from the subsequent history of their proceedings, is complete, and completely coincident, as to the supernatural endowments conferred on the apostles, and qualifying them for their office. The assurances of Christ beforehand, and the history of the apostles afterward, must be taken together and interpreted in the same sense. Conjoined, they amount to the strongest of all possible proofs of the assertion of the fact of their supernatural inspiration by our Lord, by themselves, and by the Christian Church, to which they ministered with their miraculous gifts. To embody in human speech the impress of a divine life,—to complete in the New Testament Scriptures what required after our Lord's departure to be supplemented of a divine revelation,—and to trace the outlines and develop the essential principles of a divine polity for the Church of all time, demanded and received in the case of the apostles a supernatural inspiration.



III. The evidence furnished by the special testimonies to its own inspiration, found in the writings of the New Testament, constitutes another and important branch of the argument. The force of the apologetic proof from this quarter can be estimated only by duly considering the positions already laid down in connection with the apostolic and prophetic men who were its authors.

The prophetic order of men reaching from Moses downward to the close of the Old Testament canon, and the authors of the various books in which the Old Testament revelations were contained, reappeared simultaneously with the appearance of the revelations given at the opening of the New Testament era. Including all the powers and gifts of prophets, but embracing others still higher, we find the apostolic order instituted about the same date. The writers of the New Testament belong to one or other of these two orders of men; the much larger portion having been written by the pens of apostles, and only a very few books by men belonging to the prophetic order,—that is, by persons to whom supernatural revelations were given as in Old Testament times. This much we are entitled to assume by the concession of all who concede that the present books included in the New Testament are really canonical, and also authentic and credible; or, in other words, that we have in these books a supernatural revelation contained in a record that justly claims to possess the quality of historical veracity.

In the case both of the writings of the New Testament which claim apostolical origin, and of those of them which are due to the prophetic order of men, all that is necessary is to show that they were written by apostles or prophets, in order to justify the inference that they were written also by inspiration. The technical and publicly recognised character of both, as men to whom the supernatural influences of the Spirit were vouchsafed, guaranteed the fact of the inspiration of the writings emanating from them; so that nothing more is wanting to show that any book is inspired, than simply the proof that it was composed and issued by an apostle or a

prophet in the Scripture sense of the word. Hence the identification in any way of the authorship of the New Testament books with the apostolical or prophetic order of men is enough without anything else to prove inspiration. 'Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ;' 'Paul, and Silvanus, and Timotheus;' 'James, a servant of God;' 'Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ;' 'Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ;' or such like titles prefixed to their letters, or in any way connected with them, were sufficient guarantee to those addressed, that the letters were the dictates of the inspiration of God.

The importance of their authentication and evidence is specially brought out in the case of Paul in the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians, where, in reference probably to forged letters, 'as from him,' of which he had spoken in the earlier part of his letter, he adds, towards the close, as the test or mark of his inspired communications, 'The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write.' The identification, in whatever form it might be furnished, of the writing with the authorship of an inspired man, was needed to prove the writing to be inspired; but when conclusively given, was sufficient for that end. With this fact known to the readers of the writing, there was no necessity or room for elaborate or formal statements of the supernatural inspiration of the authors. Such statements would have been so entirely incongruous, unless when justified by special circumstances and exigencies, or by the character of the subject treated of, that they would have looked like untrue rather than true claims to the gift: the silent assumption of the fact, mutually understood by writer and readers, was more consistent with indirect references to it than dogmatic or pretentious assertions of it.

In dealing with the special testimonies to its own inspiration, scattered up and down through the text of the New Testament, this general consideration is especially to be borne in mind. Both their number and their character to a considerable extent are determined by the fact that the writings

accepted as the authorship of prophetic or apostolic men, or, in other words, of inspired men, did not need to be proved to be themselves inspired in the case of the persons to whom they were addressed. This, at the outset, must be accepted as a principle of interpretation in seeking to estimate the value of the special testimonies of the New Testament to its own inspiration.

It is difficult to classify these testimonies in any order that would bring out clearly or adequately their proper value.

1. 'But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, He shall testify of Me; and ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with Me from the beginning' (John xv. 26, 27).

'The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew, and hanged on a tree: Him hath God exalted with His right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness of sins. And we are His witnesses of these things; and so is also the Holy Ghost' (Acts v. 30-32).

'I say the truth in Christ, I lie not, my conscience also bearing me witness in the Holy Ghost' (Rom. ix. 1).

'This is He that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood: and it is the Spirit that beareth witness, because the Spirit is truth. . . . If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater: for this is the witness of God which He hath testified of His Son' (1 John v. 6, 9).

All these passages speak of a double witness-bearing to the facts and truths of the gospel. In the promise of our Lord to His disciples recorded in John, the Spirit proceeding from the Father is spoken of as one witness to Christ, and the apostles, as a second party, testifying to the same truth. In the address of Peter given in the Acts, when speaking of the resurrection he cites the same two witnesses for the truth of the fact,—namely, the Holy Ghost on the one side, and himself and his brother apostles on the other. In the solemn asseveration of Paul in the Epistle to the Romans as to his

desire for the salvation of Israel, he confirms his own word by the addition of the witness of the Spirit. In the Epistle of John we have once more the testimony of the Spirit and the testimony of man distinguished, but conjoined, in bearing witness to the same doctrine.

Now it is quite true that the witness borne by the Holy Spirit to Christ is in part to be explained in reference to those miracles and signs of an outward kind by which the Spirit illustrated and proved the divine mission of the Son; and also by that inward witness in the soul of the believer wrought by the Spirit, and furnishing in some instances yet more impressive evidence to the person himself that Jesus is the Christ. But it would be difficult to limit all or any of these passages to such an interpretation, as if the witness of the Spirit were only to be found in the external miracles, or the inward conversion, that convince of Christ.

In their oral and written declarations of Christian truth, the apostolic men who emitted them were witnesses for Christ, as any human witness who had certain knowledge of the facts and truth might be. But, in addition to this, in all that they spake and wrote, they were inspired men; and the Holy Ghost, speaking through their words, was a second witness distinguishable from the first, and conspiring with the first to bear evidence to the same truths. Nothing short of this will satisfy or explain aright the language of the various passages above quoted. There were two witnesses, easily distinguishable, and yet in reality combined, in the testimony that they bore to Christ. It was an evidence coming from different and opposite quarters, yet speaking through the same words. The one was from God, and the other was from man. Yet the one did not neutralize or supersede the other, but only confirmed and established it. They joined in the same testimony to Christ, and the human and divine witness became one in inspired Scripture.

2. 'Now to Him that is of power to stablish you according to my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the

world began, but now is made manifest, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, made known to all nations for the obedience of faith; to God only wise, be glory through Jesus Christ for ever' (Rom. xvi. 25-27).

It may be a matter of some doubt, whether the expression, 'the Scriptures of the prophets,' in this passage, is to be interpreted as meaning the Old Testament writings, according to its almost invariable New Testament usage, or the writings of the prophetic men who were the authors of the New Testament. But in either case the language of the apostle is inconsistent with any mutilated theory of inspiration. If the phrase refers to the earlier prophets who received and recorded the revelations of God in former days, then the apostle here associates his own teaching with theirs, as fulfilling a like office, and possessing an authority no less infallible than what belonged to their inspired compositions. If, on the contrary, the language of the apostle refers to the New Testament writers, it furnishes complete evidence, that they themselves were prophets, and their writings prophetic, in the Old Testament sense of the phraseology; in other words, that the New Testament penmen, like the holy men of old, spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

3. 'And I, brethren, when I came to you, came not with excellency of speech, or of wisdom, declaring unto you the testimony of God. . . . And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power; that your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God. Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect; yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: but we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory; which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. But, as it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have



entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him. But God hath revealed them unto us by His Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God knoweth no man, but the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. . . . For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct Him? But we have the mind of Christ' (1 Cor. ii. 1-16).

The divisions in the Corinthian Church,—the influence and the prevalence of false teachers, who boasted of their wisdom and eloquence,—more especially gave occasion to the apostle to assert against them the authority both of himself as an ambassador of Christ, and of his teaching as from God. In doing this, although not much accustomed, unless provoked by such emergencies, to assert his own standing as an inspired apostle, he has repeatedly, in the course of his letters to them, set forth in strong terms the divine authority of his words.

In this passage he first contrasts his doctrine with that of the teachers who had caused the divisions. Negatively, it did not come with excellency of human wisdom; it was not with man's wisdom; it was not the wisdom of the world, or of the princes of the world; it was not conceived in the spirit of the world. Positively, it was the testimony of God taught with demonstration of the Spirit and power; it stood, not in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God; it was the wisdom of God in a mystery,—the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world; it had been revealed unto the apostles by the Spirit. And the more surely to intimate the grandeur and peculiarity of its supernatural origin, he declares that in the intelligent universe there was none but One that had the capacity to understand, or the power to make known, this

wisdom. As the spirit that was in man, alone of all others knew his thoughts and could declare them, so the Spirit that is in God alone can understand His wisdom and reveal it. It was this Spirit which is of God that the apostle had received, in order that he might know the things freely given of God; he knew them, because he had the mind of Christ.

But, secondly, he contrasts his speech, or oral declaration of this doctrine, with the eloquence of others. He did not come to Corinth with excellency of speech; his preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom; the things which he taught he spake not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth. And so close was the connection between the doctrine revealed and the words taught by the Spirit for the expression of it, that the apostle explains it as comparing spiritual things with spiritual, or 'attaching spiritual words to spiritual things.'<sup>1</sup> The supernatural origin both of the doctrine taught, and of the form in which it was taught, is unmistakeably asserted by the apostle in this passage.

4. 'If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things that I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord' (1 Cor. xiv. 37).

'I told you before, and foretell you, as if I were present, the second time; and being absent, now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all other, that, if I come again, I will not spare: since ye seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, which to you-ward is not weak, but is mighty in you' (2 Cor. xiii. 2, 3).

In these two passages we have another specimen of the assertion by Paul of his apostolic authority and inspiration when it was necessary, in consequence of the peculiar circumstances of the Corinthian Church, pointedly to declare it. In the first case, such an assertion was called for by the disorders at Corinth originating in the abuse of the supernatural gifts the early believers enjoyed, and in the immodesty of females teaching in the Church. Having laid down definite

<sup>1</sup> Alford: Greek Testament, 1 Cor. ii. 13.

laws for the regulation of the conduct of those possessed with the gift of tongues and revelations, and for the suppression of the practice of women speaking in the Christian assemblies, he makes it an express test of the reality of their discipleship that they should acknowledge that his regulations were the commandments of the Lord. In the second case, the exercise of spiritual discipline in the case of offenders having been suffered to go into abeyance, or having been abused at Corinth, the apostle asserts his supereminent authority, as a man guided by the Spirit of God to put to rights this abuse, and in what he said and did, claims to have Christ speaking in him. In both instances, the assertion of infallible authority is the more remarkable, as his decisions in the affairs of the Corinthian Church were no part of revealed doctrine, but the application of Scripture principles interpreted to meet certain cases of order and discipline that required regulation.

5. 'I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. But I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man. For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ' (Gal. i. 6-12).

The authority of Paul had been questioned, and, what he felt more keenly, the gospel of the grace of God had been corrupted by Judaizing teachers in the churches of Galatia; and hence we have here another example of the vehemence of feeling and strength of language to which he was moved in asserting his infallibility. Nothing but the most assured

belief in his own extraordinary powers as an inspired man, could explain or justify the terms in which he denounces the false teachers who had preached another gospel than his. He had not, he tells us, received his doctrine from men; he had not been taught it by the other apostles; he did not claim their authority for what he said, or seek that they should share his responsibility in saying it. Upon his own solitary word he demanded to be believed, when he pronounced them accursed who should differ from him; nay, though the authority of an angel from heaven, or the highest created intelligence, should affirm the contrary—as he said before, so he would say now again. Both the elements that go to make up a supernatural inspiration are conspicuous in his language,—infallible truth and divine authority,—and nothing short of these can be made consistent with his words.

6. ‘And (ye) are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone’ (Eph. ii. 20).

‘For this cause, I Paul, the prisoner of Jesus Christ for you Gentiles, if ye have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God which is given me to you-ward: how that by revelation He made known unto me the mystery (as I wrote afore in few words; whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ), which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the gospel: whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God, given unto me by the effectual working of His power’ (Eph. iii. 1-7).

The assertion in the first of these quotations, that the Ephesian Christians were built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, undoubtedly amounted to a declaration that the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, in which they had believed for the salvation of their souls, was infallibly true and certain. And the explanation given in the second

quotation, how the doctrine had been made known by revelation, and once more how it was revealed, after being long kept secret, unto His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit, links together the infallible certainty of the doctrine, and the extraordinary agency of the Spirit. Throughout the whole epistle the apostle speaks as a man endowed by the Spirit with plenary infallibility to declare the truth of God, and to demand entire faith and submission in respect of the declaration.

7. 'For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when ye received the word of God which ye heard of us, ye received it not as the word of men, but, as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually worketh also in you that believe' (1 Thess. ii. 13).

The cause for the fervent thanksgiving to God, rendered by the apostle on account of the Thessalonian Christians, was that they had received his teaching as divine teaching, although heard from human lips. The significant contrast between the word of man, or all ordinary human instruction, and the word of God, or the inspired instruction heard from him, is strongly brought out by the language employed.

8. 'Furthermore then, we beseech you, brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jesus, that as ye have received of us how ye ought to walk and to please God, so ye would abound more and more. For ye know what commandments we gave you by the Lord Jesus' (1 Thess. iv. 1, 2).

'He therefore that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God, who hath also given unto us His Holy Spirit' (1 Thess. iv. 8).

These two passages are connected, the one as the sequel of the other, and following out the same line of thought. In the first the apostle's exhortations and instructions on the subject of duty pleasing to God, are called by him the commandments by the Lord Jesus. In what sense they were Christ's commandments, and not rather the apostle's, is more distinctly shown in the second, where Paul declares both the manner in which they were Christ's, and the nature and amount of the obedience due to them. They were the commandments of the Lord Jesus, because, although spoken by



the lips of a man, yet to that man the Holy Spirit had been given; and the authority that belonged to them, in consequence, was such that Paul might say to the persons who rejected them, He that despiseth, despiseth not man, but God.

9. 'For this we say unto you by the word of the Lord, that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord, shall not prevent them that are asleep' (1 Thess. iv. 15).

The value of this passage as a testimony for the supernatural gifts of inspiration with which the apostle was privileged, can only be estimated by a consideration of its connection with the promise of Christ to His apostles before His removal. In that promise there was a special proviso that the Spirit would show them things to come, as well as lead them into all truth; and in the extraordinary revelation given to Paul as to the order to be observed among the risen saints at the coming of Christ, we have an example of the fulfilment of the promise, in a case where, for the comfort and edification of the Thessalonian Church, it was desirable that they should be informed as to the future. It forms a marked illustration of how, in the extraordinary fulness of the Spirit given, he was equipped at every point for the discharge of the duties of the apostolic office.

10. 'But we are bound to give thanks alway to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth; whereunto He hath called you by our gospel, to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle' (2 Thess. ii. 13-15).

There are two points here especially interesting. First of all, the connection of the argument for inspiration in the case of the early writers of the New Testament when addressing the converts, is, as it were, undesignedly but most strikingly brought out in this passage. The Thessalonians had been chosen by God to salvation through the double instrumen-

talities of sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the word,—the divine word being equally necessary and on an equal footing with the Divine Spirit. They had become acquainted with this word only through the preaching of the apostle or his gospel, which is thus put upon the level of the divine word and Divine Spirit. And lastly, if they were to stand fast in the salvation to which they were called, it must be by holding the traditions which Paul had taught them. Nothing could more clearly evince the connection between the certainty of the salvation of these Christians, and the infallibility of the word that the apostle had delivered to them.

But secondly, the form in which this word was taught was a twofold form. It was sometimes by word of mouth; it was sometimes by written epistles; and both were alike and equally infallible as the ground on which their salvation rested. Nothing could more distinctly bring out the groundlessness of the idea that there is a distinction between the oral and the written word of the apostles. This theory has been advocated by many who cannot deny or get rid of the evidence for the supernatural inspiration of the apostles, as clearly promised before, and so evidently realized after, the day of Pentecost, in the actual history of their subsequent life; but who restrict it to their oral teaching, in contradistinction to their written. This notion, evidently untenable upon the reason of the thing, is here expressly contradicted by the apostle, who puts his word and epistle upon the same level.

11. 'Of which salvation the prophets have inquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that should come unto you: searching what, or what manner of time, the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us, they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven' (1 Pet. i. 10-12).

First of all, it is plain from this passage that the inspira-

tion of the Old Testament writers was no modification or special development of the spiritual enlightenment of the writers, but an official endowment quite consistent with the ignorance of the truth recorded by the person recording it; and with his being left to the ordinary methods of acquiring a knowledge of God's revelation which are competent to other men. Secondly, the declaration of the truths of the gospel in New Testament times was by an inspiration originating in the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. And thirdly, the inspiration of New Testament prophets is put upon the same level with that of the holy men under the Old Testament, who spake by the Spirit of Christ, not knowing personally the mysteries that He uttered through them.

12. 'This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance; that ye may be mindful of the words that were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of our Lord and Saviour' (2 Pet. iii. 1, 2).

This is another example of the practice of the New Testament writers to claim a co-ordinate place for themselves, and an equal authority for their words, with the prophets and prophecies of the Old Testament. Whether it is to be read, as in the English version, 'the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour,' or as it has been proposed, 'the commandment of the Lord and Saviour given by us the apostles,' the value of the passage as a testimony to the plenary inspiration of the New Testament is the same.

13. 'The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave unto Him, to show unto His servants things which must shortly come to pass; and He sent and signified it by His angel unto His servant John: who bare testimony of the word of God, and of the testimony of Jesus Christ, and of all things that he saw. Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein' (Rev. i. 1-3).

'I was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, and heard behind me a great voice, as of a trumpet, saying, I am Alpha and

Omega, the first and the last: and, What thou seest, write in a book' (Rev. i. 10, 11).

'Write the things which thou hast seen, and the things which are, and the things which shall be hereafter' (Rev. i. 19).

'And He said unto me, These sayings are faithful and true: and the Lord God of the holy prophets sent His angel to show unto His servants the things which must shortly be done. Behold, I come quickly: blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book' (Rev. xxii. 6, 7).

'For I testify to every man who heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book; and if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book' (Rev. xxii. 18, 19).

The book of Revelation by John, as it is the latest book in the New Testament, is also one of the clearest and most decisive in its announcements of its own supernatural inspiration. It opens with a vision of God, and with the sound of the trumpet that summoned the Israelites to hear the words of God on Sinai, as if the close and the opening of the written revelation of God were to be sealed and authenticated by the same solemnities. John, the latest of the penmen of Scripture, receives from the Almighty precisely the same command as Moses, the earliest, to write all that he heard in a book. To knit into one brotherhood of inspired and divine authority all the writers and the writings that lay between, the beloved disciple tells us that the God who had spoken to him the faithful and true sayings which he had recorded, was the same that had spoken to them, for He was the Lord God of the holy prophets. And, like Moses, when he was about to go away, and when he commanded that they should take the book of the law and put it in the side of the ark of the covenant of the Lord their God to be a witness against them, John, ere he shuts up the canon of inspiration,

leaves behind him a terrible denunciation against the man who should add to or take from the words of this book.

Now, if the special testimonies borne by the New Testament writers to their own inspiration, over and above that drawn from the formal and public character which they bore in the sight of their readers, are examined with any attention, it is impossible not to be struck with one consideration which has an important bearing on the argument. It is impossible not to feel that there is no reason whatever arising out of the superior authority, as compared with other passages, of the particular statements to which special testimony of inspiration is thus attached, that would forbid the extension of these testimonies to any one sentence that the penmen of Scripture ever officially wrote. As a general rule, the practice was to rest upon their public and well-known character as agents of the Spirit of God, as sufficient evidence of the supernatural authority of what they wrote to the parties whom they addressed, and who both understood and recognised that character. Any departure from that rule is found connected either with those particular cases in which the authority belonging to their office was questioned, or when the truth or the duty declared specially called for confirmation; and when, in consequence, the writers were naturally led to assert their supernatural mission, or the inspiration of their words. But there is nothing in the authority of their office or words at other times that could have prevented them, if circumstances had called for it, to have made the same assertions in regard to anything that they ever as penmen of Scripture wrote. These special testimonies, therefore, go much further, in the way of evidence, than their number or specific strength would seem to imply.

The only evidence of an opposing kind that has ever been alleged against the uniform claim of the New Testament writers to be accepted as inspired men in all that they wrote, is founded upon a misunderstanding of the language of the Apostle Paul in the Epistle to the Corinthians. The misinterpretation is scarcely advocated now by any competent



expositor, and has been disclaimed by parties who hold no strict or high views of inspiration.

It appears that certain questions as to the law of marriage, and certain doubts as to the duty of Christians in connection with it, had been referred from the Church at Corinth to the decision of the apostle. The nature of these questions may be inferred generally from the answers that are given, and they plainly seem to have raised the doubt as to the lawfulness or expediency of the marriage state in the instance of Christians, and with respect to the duty of continuing in it, especially in the case where one of the married parties was not a believer. In proceeding to reply, the apostle affirms the lawfulness of the privilege of marriage to unmarried Christians, although, in the peculiar circumstances of the time, he asserts celibacy to be expedient; and, conceding to believers the enjoyment of marriage to be perfectly lawful, he adds: 'I speak this by permission, and not by commandment.' It is this language of the apostle that by a few interpreters has been reckoned an admission that, in giving his opinion in this particular case, he spoke by permission of the Spirit of God, but without commandment from Him.

Even had this interpretation of the peculiar phraseology employed been admissible on exegetical grounds, it would not have led to any conclusion hostile to the fact of the apostle's inspiration. If his words were permitted by the Spirit of God, they could not have been opposed to His mind, but rather in harmony with it, and as much, therefore, to be regarded as accordant with divine and infallible truth as if they had been commanded. But both the proper interpretation of the words and the connection of the argument require that they should be understood, not as referring to any permission given or withheld by the Holy Ghost in inspiration, but to a permission of marriage to Christians, as in itself, and in spite of the unfavourable character of the times, lawful to a believer; and not a commanded duty at all times binding, and necessary to be performed. The apostle did not enjoin it upon all, but permitted it to any who might

feel themselves called upon by their peculiar tendencies and circumstances to enter into the marriage relationship. There is a parallel use of language in the second epistle to the same church, where, in reference to a collection for the poor saints, Paul says, 'I speak not by commandment;' 'Herein I give my advice,'—both the commandment and the advice referring to the persons whom he addressed, and not to the Spirit of God by whom he spake.

In the case of married persons, he forbids separation as a general rule plainly dictated by our Lord Himself; and if separation takes place, he forbids a second marriage: 'Unto the married I command, yet not I, but the Lord, Let not the wife depart from her husband: but and if she depart, let her remain unmarried.' The commandment that he gives does not rest merely or only on the authority of an inspired apostle, although that itself were enough, because infallible; but it rests on the express words of our Lord as recorded in the Gospel by Mark, where our Saviour had already given judgment on the same question.

With respect to the case of mixed marriages, in which a believer should be found joined to an unbeliever, there was no such express decision by our Lord that could be quoted or referred to. In regard to these cases, then, or 'to the rest,' the apostle himself, in his character and office as an inspired apostle, gave forth his own decision: 'To the rest speak I, not the Lord; If any brother hath a wife that believeth not, and she be pleased to dwell with him, let him not put her away. And the woman that hath an husband that believeth not, and if he be pleased to dwell with her, let her not leave him.' In the one case there was a formal judgment of Christ Himself ruling the matter in dispute; in the other case there was no such judgment; and to supply the want, Paul gave his own.

In this latter instance, so far from there being any precedent to refer to in the divine commandment, the decision of the apostle was a formal abrogation of the Mosaic law which required the Jew to put away from him his heathen

wife; and especially manifested and demanded a supernatural inspiration to justify it. The contrast suggested is not between what was spoken by inspiration of the Spirit, and what was spoken by Paul without inspiration; but rather between a formal law long before laid down by the Lord, and a new commandment given by Paul in his character as an apostolic and inspired man. There is no concession, as has been alleged, that in anything he speaks without inspiration; on the contrary, the very nature of his decision, running counter as it did to the Mosaic practice, would itself prove it to be an inspired revelation from God.

Precisely the same principle of interpretation applies to the third case of duty referred to the opinion of the apostle. In respect to the marriage of unmarried women, he gives his own decision, in the absence of any formal judgment pronounced by our Lord: 'Now concerning virgins I have no commandment of the Lord: yet I give my judgment, as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful.' Here, again, the contrast is not between inspiration and not inspiration, but between the formal commandments of Christ, of which there was not any applicable to the case, and the verdict of the apostle speaking under the supernatural guidance of the Spirit of God. The grace that he speaks of as having been given to him to enable him to be faithful, evidently points to faithfulness in his office as an apostle to speak and decide as the Spirit gave him utterance. The judgment, accordingly, that he pronounces, he gives forth without any hesitation or doubt as to its binding obligation.

Both in the instance of the questions about marriage, and in the case of the divisions and disorders in the Corinthian Church, upon which he gives his decision in the subsequent chapters of this epistle, he speaks as one having a right to claim the absolute belief and submission of all parties in the controversy. It is in reference to these matters that in the fourteenth chapter he demands that his judgment as an apostle should be regarded as of no less authority than that of Christ Himself, and challenges submission to his words as

a test in the case of both the prophets and private members of the Corinthian Church: 'If any man think himself to be a prophet, or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write unto you are the commandments of the Lord.' It cannot be truly argued from any language employed by the apostle, that he ever confessed the absence of supernatural inspiration in anything he ever said or did as an apostle.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Alford's New Test., *in loc.*

## CHAPTER X.

### THE DIVINE AND HUMAN IN SCRIPTURE.

THE evidence for the inspiration of Scripture has established the fact, that the sacred volume is the authorship of God in the ordinary sense of the word. It contains God's thoughts ; it is the expression of His mind and will ; it was produced by His agency ; it is characterized throughout by His style of truth ; it is marked in all its statements by His infallibility and authority. Nothing else is needed to make the Bible, in the proper sense of the term, the authorship of God.

But the Bible was written by men. It came from the hands of its human authors as certainly as any other book that was ever written by men. It is marked by all the evidences of human authorship that identify any other writing as the composition of its authors. It contains their thoughts ; it is the expression of their mind ; it was produced by them in the exercise of their ordinary powers and faculties, working according to their natural laws ; it bears the impress of their peculiar style of thought and feeling, and natural or acquired endowments ; it is marked by the human individuality that distinguishes the writing of any man who thinks and writes with freedom and earnestness in his own character, and without any disguise.

These are the two general facts that meet us the moment we accept the evidence for inspiration, which proves the supernatural origin and character of the sacred volume, and establishes the conclusion that, both as to its contents and form, it is of God. Of course the first and primary idea respecting the book which we call the Bible, is, that whatever other and higher character may attach to it, it is man's in the



sense that man is the author of it. The book that was written by Moses, or the epistles that were written by Paul, are their authorship in the same way that any human history or letters are the authorship of the parties who wrote them. And this first and most conspicuous character that belongs to the sacred volume in common with every other, has, with very few exceptions, never been denied to it by any one, even when the second idea of the authorship of one higher than man has come to be joined to the first as the proper expression of the truth in respect to Scripture.

In the case of the Montanists, indeed, in the early Church, there was a denial of the proper and full human authorship of the sacred volume, when they asserted that the inspired men were possessed by the Divine Spirit in such a sort as to suspend the exercise of their natural faculties under inspiration, and make them no more than unconscious and unintelligent instruments in receiving and recording the revelation given to them. This was a virtual denial of the human authorship in asserting the divine. With some also of those in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries who held high views on the subject of inspiration, and especially who adopted a theory of dictation, or some other mechanical explanation, in order to illustrate it, there may have been assertions made or propositions laid down, in themselves inferring a denial of the human authorship of Scripture. But in this latter instance it is very doubtful indeed whether the advocates of these theories ever meant to repudiate the proposition that the human writers of Scripture were, in the proper sense of the words, authors of Scripture, or that there was any abridgment or suspension of their essential powers as men while under the inspiration by which they wrote. The statements made may indeed naturally, or even logically, amount to such a denial; but it is not just to charge upon men the consequences of their language when these consequences are not avowed or are denied, even although they may legitimately be deducible from the statements made. The first and obvious character impressed upon the page of Scripture, that

its authorship is due to the men who actually wrote it, has, with very trifling exceptions, never been denied formally or advisedly by any parties in the controversy about inspiration.

But if, starting from this first fact, we join to it the second fact established by the evidence for the inspiration of the sacred volume,—namely, that the authorship of it is divine,—we are at once met by the difficulty of understanding and accepting the combination of the two ideas. A double authorship, in the sense in which the evidence would lead us to attribute it to the Bible, is a thing unknown in the case of other books; and anything approaching to it leads directly to the notion of a partial and not a complete authorship, with respect to the one party or the other combined together in the joint production of the volume.

A human volume may be the product of the conjoined thoughts and composition of two writers; the one of them responsible for the one portion of the contents, or the one department of the literary execution, and the other for the remainder. In such a case it is quite possible to distinguish what belongs to the one author from what belongs to the other; and it is not possible to assert, with respect to the whole writing equally and alike, and with respect to all the thoughts equally and alike, that there is a twofold authorship, or that it is due to two minds. But this twofold origin of the Scripture is the result to which all the evidence that we have on the subject points. It is entirely unlike what is found in the instance of any human composition, the analogies from which, if they were alone to guide us, would lead us either to deny the double origin attributed to the inspired record, or to explain the twofold authorship as attaching separately to different portions of its contents, or to different truths recorded in it. In point of fact, the difficulty of conceiving or explaining how the Bible can be wholly the authorship of man, and yet wholly the authorship of God, has been the fruitful source of many of those partial and mutilated theories of inspiration that have been prevalent.

Proceeding upon the analogies suggested by human author-

ship, in which two authors have been conjoined in the production of the same composition, these theories have either limited the divine operation in the authorship of Scripture to make room for the human, or have reversed the process, and limited the human to make room for the divine. If the Scriptures were singly due to man, and no more than human writings, there would be as little difficulty in understanding how a revelation from God might be written by unaided pens, as how a communication of knowledge or truth from any other quarter could have been so written. If, again, the Scriptures were singly due to God as the writer of them, and human minds and pens had never been employed about the inspired page,—if the Bible had been written, as the first tables of stone were written, by the finger of God, without the hand of man,—we could have accepted the miracle, and not been troubled with the difficulty of attempting to reconcile the combination of the divine and human agencies to produce the one result. Or, once more, if, acknowledging the double authorship of Scripture, we were at liberty to explain it as we do the double authorship of some human composition, by attributing certain departments of its contents or its thoughts to one mind, and certain other of them to the second, we should have less difficulty in understanding the result.

Every one of these three methods has been employed to solve the problem of inspired Scripture. According to the first plan, while admitting that the Bible contains a supernatural revelation from God, some theorists have been satisfied to explain the record by saying that it is, like other records, simply and only the writing of man. According to the second method, there have been instances of theorists who have denied the human authorship, and ascribed it only to God as the single author. And according to the third method, there have been Christian apologists that have relegated the divine and human authorship to separate and distinct portions of Scripture, making the one to be present when the other was absent, or the one active in exact degree as the other was inactive in the inspired page. But all

equally contradict the evidence which Scripture gives us as to the facts. The first class of theorists deny the supernatural element in inspired Scripture; the second repudiate the human; the third deny both the fulness of the divine and the fulness of the human, each in its integrity, in order that they may be conjoined in a mutilated and imperfect form in the same volume, and supplement each other in different degrees in different places of Scripture.

The two facts, that the Bible is all inspired by God, and that the Bible is all written by man, cannot be denied, without denying the plain evidence upon the subject. As little can they be explained away by limiting the divine and human authorship in Scripture to separate departments or different classes of truths in Scripture; or by curtailing and cutting down the entireness of each agency, so that their combination may be made compatible, according to human analogies of compatibility.

The supernatural agency ranges over the whole sacred volume, and pervades all its truths alike, and it is as much supernatural in one passage of Scripture as another: and there can be no distinction made without playing fast and loose with the evidence for its existence and reality, which applies equally to all Scripture. The human agency ranges over every page which the pen of man has written in Scripture; and it is not more or less human authorship in one department of its truths than in another: it is impossible, in consistency with the facts, to allege that the human freedom of the sacred penmen, and the exercise of their proper faculties, moving according to the ordinary laws of the human constitution, were different when writing one, from what they were when writing any other passage. Both the real existence and the complete integrity of the divine and the human agency must be accepted as a fact in reference to the whole Bible alike, however much it may differ from any fact known in the analogous cases of human authorship;—whatever explanation we may give of the fact, or even though we should be able to give no explanation at all.

In thus asserting the double character that belongs to the Bible, of its being at once the authorship of God and the authorship of man, we cannot be chargeable with inventing a theory to suit our own views : we are no more than asserting the facts as Scripture has made them known to us, of the result of the divine and human agencies that confessedly were, somehow or other, both concerned about the production of the inspired volume.

Unless it be assumed that the Bible is nothing but a human writing, the agency of God, in one shape or other, was employed in connection with the authorship. Unless it be assumed that the Bible is nothing but a divine writing, then the agency of man, in one way or another, was used to produce it. We assert nothing but a fact, proved by Scripture itself, and admitted, indeed, by all parties except those who deny inspiration in any sense, when we say that, in some way or another, the Scriptures are due both to the authorship of God and to the authorship of man. If, indeed, we advanced beyond this, and proceeded to explain how, according to our idea, this combination of the divine and human in Scripture was accomplished and is to be explained, we would be guilty of theorizing on the point, and going beyond what has been revealed in the sacred volume ; and this is the mistake fallen into by many who advocate explanations of how the two agencies were proportioned to each other, or present and absent respectively, in different departments of Scripture truth. But so long as we confine ourselves to the simple assertion, which all the evidence on the subject warrants us to make, that God by His inspiration is the author of the whole Bible, and that man, in the exercise of his ordinary powers as man, is the author of the whole Bible also, we are asserting nothing but a fact, and cannot be charged with inventing a theory.

The two separate truths involved in that assertion can be proved by the only evidence competent or relevant in the matter,—by the testimony of the Bible itself to the fact. If the two propositions are taken apart the one from the other, there



is no difficulty either in understanding them, or in proving the truth of them: the difficulty begins only when we conjoin them, and look at them in combination, with a view to understand and explain the result.

Putting out of sight for the moment the human agency employed in the composition of Scripture, there is no difficulty in understanding the proposition that God produced it by His miraculous agency, so that it contains His mind, and is impregnated with His truth, and is due to Him as the author of it. There is no difficulty in understanding this, at least in the same way, and to the same extent, that we understand any pure miracle or supernatural work that God ever performed. And there is no difficulty as to the kind or amount of proof by which this fact can be established. The miracle of inspiration can be established by the testimony of the men who had experience of it, in the same way as any other; giving us complete assurance that the Spirit of God was present, and operating in a supernatural way, in reference to every part of the sacred volume alike, so as to make it all in the same sense the production or the authorship of God.

Or, reversing the process, and putting out of sight for a moment the supernatural agency employed in the composition of the Bible, there is no difficulty in understanding the proposition, that the revelation given to them by God, like any other communication made to them from some foreign quarter, was put into writing by the Scripture penmen, so that the book they wrote was their proper authorship,—a record of what they had learned of facts and truths from a source apart from themselves. And there is no difficulty in finding the proof of this in the volume which they wrote. There are there the unmistakeable evidences of human authorship, and of the exercise of the ordinary powers of the writers, acting according to their known and recognised laws, without any such restraint or control as would suspend or neutralize their human powers. Besides their own assertions of the fact, there is all the evidence that the Scripture writers were the authors of the books that they wrote, that there is in

the case of the authorship of any common and uninspired volume.

These two propositions, taken each by itself and apart from the other, can be both distinctly understood and clearly proved; and if so taken separately, there would probably be found no difficulty (at least in the case of those who accept the supernatural as a fact that can be proved) in admitting the sufficiency of the proof which Scripture offers for each. It is only when found in combination, that the difficulty, either of understanding them or of accepting the evidence, is experienced. The difficulty of comprehending or explaining the possibility of the conjunction of the divine and human power, each in its perfection and integrity, in bringing about the one result of the Scripture volume, is one that the advocates of plenary inspiration do not pretend to solve. They are contented to leave it as they find it in the Bible, without any attempt to explain it. How far this difficulty is to be regarded as an objection to the truth of plenary inspiration, which necessarily implies the conjunction, or sufficient to set aside the evidence in favour of the fact, will be considered at a subsequent stage of the discussion.

In the meantime, it is important to remark, that the truth of the divine authorship of the sacred volume is established by exactly the same kind of evidence that the human authorship of Scripture is proved by; so that we can with no propriety or consistency accept the one doctrine while we reject the other. It is also important to remark, that when we assert that the Bible exhibits both a divine and human authorship, we must not be understood to assert it in any secondary or inferior sense, as if God speaking to men in His written revelation were different in point of truth or authority from God speaking to men orally and face to face; or as if the human authorship were totally distinct from the authorship by man of any other book. In seeking to understand the respective places of the divine and human elements in Scripture, it is necessary to keep in view these two positions.

First, the same kind, and very much the same amount, of

evidence, demonstrates the divine and the human authorships of the sacred volume.

In so far as regards the authorship of God, or the supernatural inspiration of Scripture, the evidence for it has already been exhibited at some length. It resolves itself at last into the testimony of the inspired men through whom God spake; although it is presented in a considerable variety of forms. The explicit assertions they make in regard to the fact of the Holy Spirit in a supernatural manner occupying their mouths and pens,—the divine character of infallible truth and absolute authority which they claimed for all that they wrote,—the office that they exercised as prophets and apostles, to speak and act for God in all their official writings and proceedings,—the frequent occurrence of the formulæ of such pregnant significance, ‘Thus saith the Lord;’ ‘The Holy Ghost spake;’ ‘The word of the Lord;’ ‘It is written;’ ‘The Scriptures,’ and so on,—are evidences of the fact that, whatever share the human instruments had in the matter, the statements of the sacred volume are God’s, and that the authorship is His from beginning to end. The language which describes, asserts, or implies this fact, is precisely the language that might have been adopted had there been no human agency employed in the matter, and the divine agency alone had accomplished the result of that inspired writing which we now ascribe to the operation of both.

It is quite conceivable that, in making known His revelation to men, and embodying His truth in human language, God might have dispensed with the instrumentality that He saw fit actually to employ; so that, without the help of prophet’s mind, or tongue, or pen, He might have spoken as He spoke from the Mount, or written as He wrote upon the wall, His messages of wisdom and grace. In such a case we should have had the divine agency, and not the human,—the authorship of God alone, unfettered and unallied with the authorship of man. But the language declaring the presence of God in the word, uttered or written, would have been the same as we actually find it to be in the Bible written by human

hands. The same formula—‘Thus saith the Lord;’ ‘The Holy Ghost spake;’ ‘The word of the Lord,’ etc.—would have expressed the reality of the fact that the message was supernatural; and no other or fitter terms than those actually used to assert the infallible truth and divine authority of the statements made could have been selected. The testimonies found in Scripture to its own supernatural inspiration, in the forms and terms of them, are as clear and strong as if there had been no human instrumentality concerned in the result.

In so far as regards the human authorship of Scripture, the evidence is not only as distinct and strong as it is in the case of the divine, but it is of the same kind, and embodied very much in the same form. It is found in the testimony of the human authors who wrote the volume, and who, by express assertion, and by a thousand forms of indirect implication, prove that the authorship is theirs as really as if there had been no other agency employed in the production of it. Parallel to those evidences which prove that the presence of God is in every truth or statement which the Bible asserts, we have a similar set of testimonies which prove the presence of man in the same truths and statements. The formula is changed as to the person, but is the same as to the assertion made. Instead of ‘thus saith the Lord,’ it is ‘as saith the prophet Isaiah.’ At one instant we have God speaking, and saying, ‘I have written to thee the great things of My law;’ at another moment we have the human author—‘I Paul have written with mine own hand.’ On the one side, and demonstrating the divine authorship, we have the phrases, ‘The word of the Lord;’ ‘The law of the Lord;’ ‘The mouth of the Lord.’ On the other side, moulded into the same forms of speech, and not more or less, but equally, demonstrative of the human authorship, we find the general use of the phraseology, ‘The words of Jeremiah;’ ‘The law of Moses that could not be broken;’ ‘The mouth of His servant David.’ These and numberless other testimonies to the fact of the human authorship of Scripture, corresponding in so striking a manner to the evidence of its divine authorship, are

exactly the sort of evidence that we find in any uninspired book proving its origin to be due to its uninspired author ; and could not in the case of the Bible have been other or different, had there been no divine agency concerned in it.

But, in addition to the direct or positive testimonies to the human authorship, so nearly parallel to those given for its divine, there are the human features of its origin impressed upon the whole frame and style of the Scripture volume ; and these too are exactly analogous to the divine features, which constitute so large and strong a portion of the proof for inspiration. The two elements of infallible truth and absolute authority interwoven with every statement and doctrine of Scripture, and indirectly and often incidentally brought out in the statements of its authors, and everywhere implied in the tone of certainty and command which runs through their words, furnish the most conclusive evidence of the divine authorship of the Bible. But parallel to these, and corresponding to them in their evidential use and application, we have many features characteristic of its human authorship impressed upon the general structure and contents of Scripture, which no less strongly demonstrate its origin to be of man. On every page there is a transcript of the personal character, the characteristics of thought and expression, the habits of mind and life, the national peculiarities,—in short, the entire humanity, of the man who wrote it.

Take the Old Testament, and we have every variety of authorship and author, all proving its human origin by means of peculiarities belonging to none other than to men, and to the very men who were its authors. You have the man learned in the learning of Egypt ; you have the warrior, more skilled with the sword than the pen ; the shepherd, who composed his inspired hymns as he watched his sheep by night ; the monarch, who laid aside his crown to write his proverbs ; the prime minister of three successive monarchs, each the greatest of his time ; the herdman of Tekoah, whose talk had been of the herd ; the simple historian, the imaginative poet, the entranced prophet. Or take the New Testament,



and there is the same manifold human variety : the publican taken from the receipt of custom to write his Gospel ; the accomplished physician giving up his practice to write the history of his Master ; the fishermen called from their nets ; the student from the feet of Gamaliel, to impress with his learning and eloquence the letters that he wrote. All the varieties of natural endowment and acquired education,—the peculiarities of manner and birth and language, of rank and connection, of tastes and temperaments,—which distinguished the human authors, are stamped upon the page which they wrote, and expressed through its words ; giving to the inspired volume the impress of the most entire humanity, as the production of men whose minds acted according to the usual methods and laws, and embodied themselves freely and truly in the thought and language of its sacred page. The human characteristics so extensively pervading and so inextricably interwoven with the entire substance of Scripture, proving it so conspicuously to be the authorship of men, are in all respects parallel and equivalent to the divine characteristics of infallible truth and supreme authority also intermingled with the Bible throughout its entire range, and proving it conclusively to be the authorship of God. It is as impossible to get rid of the one evidence as to disregard the other. It is proved to be divine in the same way, and by the same kinds of evidence, that it is proved to be human.

With this double set of testimonies, so markedly similar in form and equivalent in amount, the only legitimate and reasonable method of dealing with them is to recognise them both alike, and to give equal effect to the conclusions to which they conduct us. It is impossible, with any consistency, to pick and choose between the two, if equal historical veracity is conceded to the authors of these testimonies, when they testify in one place to God speaking in their words, and at another time to man speaking in them. We may reject both sets of testimonies, and say that the Scripture writers declared what they knew to be untrue ; but if we admit their truthfulness in what they declare, we cannot, by any arbitrary

distinction of our own, give the preference to the one class of testimonies over the other. The only material difference between them is, that one asserts a supernatural fact in ascribing the authorship to God, while the other asserts a fact not supernatural in ascribing the authorship to man. But this difference can be important only in the estimation of those who do not admit the supernatural fact of an extraordinary revelation from God contained in the Bible; for to those who do admit it, there must appear to be nothing incredible at all, but rather the opposite, in the assertion that a supernatural revelation is also supernaturally inspired. If we would then deal fairly and consistently with the evidence, which, with similar and equal force, asserts a divine authorship in the like terms in which it asserts a human, we cannot resist the conclusion, that whatever human agency was used in the composition of Scripture, it is all alike divine; and that whatever divine agency was employed in it, it is all alike human.

It is perfectly true, that in accepting this conclusion, we must accept along with it the difficulty of understanding or explaining the possibility of such a union of the divine and human agencies in the one result of the inspired book, as is implied in the Scripture fact of plenary inspiration. It is impossible for us to understand how the two can meet and co-operate to the one end, without the power of God in the process superseding and setting aside the faculties of man, or the freedom of man being incompatible with the operation of God.

If this difficulty were of the nature of an impossibility, which it was not only beyond our power to understand, but also beyond the power of God to effect, it would at once present an insuperable barrier in the way of any evidence, however strong, commanding our belief in its favour. It would amount to a proposition which could not be proved by any testimony. But there are many things which we cannot understand or explain, which are not only possible but actual facts, and which, upon a fair and competent exhibition of evidence in their favour, we never hesitate to believe. We

accept the evidence in spite of the difficulty or mystery of the fact to be believed ; and we do so upon the familiar and reasonable ground, that difficulties which are not impossibilities, and may derive all their plausibility or force from our own ignorance, really amount to a very slender presumption against the truth of facts on behalf of which there can be adduced a reasonable amount of evidence. If that evidence is of a kind and degree sufficient to establish to our conviction the truth of facts of a similar kind, the mere allegation that we cannot understand and explain the fact in itself, or in its relations to others, is an objection that ought not to be allowed to set aside the positive evidence in its favour. The relevancy and actual amount of the objection, as an argument against plenary inspiration, I shall consider in the next chapter. In the meantime, it is enough to say, that if there be no contradiction in terms in the assertion that in one sense the authorship of Scripture belongs to God, while in another sense it belongs to man, we must be prepared, if we would not deal unjustly by the evidence, to give equal credit to it when it declares that the inspired volume is the word of God, and when it asserts that it is the word of man.

Secondly, It is impossible to accept the fact of the divine authorship of Scripture, or the human authorship of Scripture, in any secondary and inferior sense of the words : as if God speaking to us in His written word were different from God speaking to us by word of mouth ; or as if man were the author of the Bible in a way totally different from that in which he is the author of any other book.

In regard to the divine authorship of the Bible, there must belong to it precisely those characters of infallible truth and absolute authority which cannot but belong to every communication from God, addressed to man for his information, in whatever form it may be addressed to him. These two are the inseparable characters of every manifestation of His mind which God may make, in whatever shape, or through whatever channel, it is made : the discovery of knowledge, in so far as it declares facts or truths, must be infallibly certain ;

and in so far as it involves moral relations, must be absolutely binding. God may make known His mind through the works of nature: and to the extent that He does so, the truths or facts disclosed will be infallibly sure; and if they imply a moral character, will carry with them a perfect moral obligation. Or God may make known His mind in a supernatural manner, and orally,—by spoken language, as He has done to prophets in other days: and if He does so, His words, like His works, in so far as they declare facts and truths, will be infallibly true; and in so far as they make known moral duty, will be absolutely binding. Or, finally, God may make known His mind in a supernatural manner, not orally, but by written language, as He has done in Scripture: and there, too, His communications, in so far as they assert facts or truths, will be marked by infallibility; and to the extent that they declare our moral relations, will be absolutely and universally authoritative. The manner in which the divine communication is made, or the channel through which it is conveyed, does not affect the question of the truth or authority in itself that belongs to it as a communication from God, and which must belong to it because it is His communication.

Our interpretation, indeed, of the facts, or our understanding of the truths, whether of nature or of revelation, may be wrong; but the facts and truths, both of the one and the other, cannot be wrong if they have been written there by the great Revealer. Our relations to them may be more intimate in the one case than in the other, making it more a duty to accept and act upon them in one instance as compared with another,—in the case, for example, of the facts and truths of revelation which are personally addressed to us, as compared with the facts and truths of nature, which make no such personal appeal. But considered in themselves, the truths and facts made known by God, in whatever manner they are made known, and through whatever channel, must be equally true and authoritative. It can only be our misinterpretation that makes them uncertain to us, and our

more remote personal relations to them that make them less binding in one case than in another. Whatever comes from God, whether through the medium of His works, or His spoken word, or His written revelation, must in itself bear the impress of His own character, in being infallibly true and divinely authoritative.

There can, therefore, with respect to infallibility and authority, be no difference whatever between God speaking in the oral communications to men whom He so addresses, and God speaking in His written communications to men generally. The word spoken and the word written are due to the same source : the authorship of the one and the other is alike of God. We would not accept it on the part of a fellow-creature, as an apology available for him, that while his oral statements were true, he felt himself free from any obligation to speak truly when these were by himself committed to writing : the transference to a permanent form of his verbal statements would seem only to enhance, if possible, the obligation. And although no such analogy can apply to God, in the way of giving us a greater assurance of His truth, yet we may understand how the transference by Himself of His revelation, from the word spoken to the word written, could by no possibility have any effect in making it less infallibly certain and divinely authoritative. If, for the purpose of extending to all men, and adapting to all time, the revelations He was pleased to make, He employed the instrumentality of prophets, moved by His Spirit to impress upon the permanent page of the Bible the messages of His will that He might have spoken to each individual in turn, it is impossible to imagine that that instrumentality was permitted to defeat the very object for which it was used, and which He could confessedly have attained without such instrumentality at all.

The union of the human agency with the divine, in order that the word of God might be expressed in human speech, did not impair the perfection of the divine, or restrict its range and application ; it only, through the instrumentality



of men, embodied in a permanent form, suited to their condition and circumstances in all ages, the revelation that without such instrumentality had been spoken to the prophet at first in secret. The supernatural element was not injured or lost because it joined to itself the human, in order the better to secure its object. To assert that it was, is to assert that it ceased to be supernatural.

If, for the purpose of making more effective and impressive conveyance of His own mind to the minds of men generally, the Most High has proceeded upon the principle of doing so through men like themselves, employing the thinking souls and the living voice and the human hands of prophets to receive and speak and record His revelation to their fellows, the effect of this arrangement has been, not to destroy or limit the supernatural in the sacred volume, but only to ally it, in its integrity, to the natural, in its completeness,—thus making the voice of God to speak to us in a human accent, and His word to address us in our own tongue. To say that it has failed in the attempt, and ceased to be divine in being conjoined to the human, is nothing less than to say that the union is impossible, and beyond the power of God to accomplish. If the agency of God in the inspiration of the Bible is admitted at all, it must be admitted as a power that can fully effect that inspiration without itself being neutralized or impaired. If the Scriptures be due to the authorship of God, it is an authorship that cannot be understood as less divine than His oral communication or word. The Most High, speaking through His verbal and His written revelations, must be credited as, alike and equally, infallible and authoritative.

In regard to the human authorship of the Bible, a similar remark is applicable. It is impossible to understand the testimonies of Scripture, which assert the presence of the human element in the written word, in any sense essentially different from that in which we recognise its presence in any other volume. Although a divine and supernatural power took possession of the prophets who recorded the revelations given to them, in order that they might record them with in-

fallible accuracy, yet it was a power which did not suspend or neutralize the exercise of their ordinary faculties, or deprive them of any of their characteristics as men, or their peculiarities as writers.

One great object to be obtained by the employment of inspired men was indeed to give expression to the revelation not only through human words, but also through human thoughts and feelings, employed under the overruling control of God to exhibit and bring home the revelation to other men. In no other way, perhaps, could divine truth have been impressed on the understanding and heart.

The manifestation of God Himself in the man Christ Jesus was designed to declare the Godhead to men in a manner which no other form of manifestation could have done; bringing down to the level of man's understanding and feelings a revelation of the divine character through the medium of man's own nature and life, and acts and words. And in a similar though far inferior way, in the thoughts and feelings and words of inspired men moved by the Holy Ghost, we have an exhibition of divine and unsearchable truth set forth through a medium that, because of kin to ourselves, brings it home to our sympathies and hearts and understandings with a power and nearness which no other form of revelation could have possessed. The grand doctrines of the exceeding sinfulness of sin, and the exceeding greatness of salvation, have been revealed in the human feelings of sinners mourning under the sense of the one and rejoicing in the gladness of the other; and embalmed in an inspired record that embodied the experience of its authors. The divine truth has found expression in a language no longer strange to us, because the true utterance of men like ourselves; and its mysteries are no longer mysterious, when they come home to our sympathies from the actual knowledge and experience of them by hearts that beat in harmony with our own. But for the attainment of this object it was necessary that the revelation should be written, not by angels, but by men; and by men in the full possession and free exercise of all their

human powers of mind and heart, and not by machines. The authorship of Scripture is a true human authorship, impressed by all the marks and evidences of the individuality of the authors.

If the authorship of Scripture by its human writers is not identical in all respects with the authorship of any other book, the difference between the two interposes no real barrier between the authors and ourselves. They were made by inspiration infallible in all that they wrote, and entirely exempted from the possibility of human error; and to this extent, and no further, they differed from ordinary writers, and their authorship in the Bible differs from that of other men. But this neither unmade them as men, nor affected, in the way of restriction or limitation, the full and free development of their human powers in connection with the Bible.

Falsehood was no part of man's original nature; and the presence of error was not essential to themselves being men, or to their writings being human writings. On the contrary, in being protected from liability to error, and exalted above the power of untruth, they were but restored in the hour of inspiration, in so far, to that condition of freedom from evil in which they were created in the beginning; and exalted once more, in this respect, to the perfection of humanity, as it once was found in man yet unfallen. In being guarded from the inroad of falsehood and imperfection, when made the instruments of God to receive and write His revelations, they were lifted up into a condition more appropriate to human nature, as it was designed and at first made to be, than any in which it would have been possible for them to have uttered or recorded error; and a condition, therefore, to which everything belonged that belongs to humanity, and nothing was wanting that could make them kindred to ourselves. In respect of the relations of the human writers to the sacred volume that they penned, the presence along with them of the supernatural power of God left them as much and as truly the authors of it, as if there had been no divine agency co-operating to the result.

In summing up the testimonies on inspiration, and endeavouring to estimate the result, the assertions on the part of Scripture of a divine authorship cannot be interpreted in any sense that would consist with the absence of any one of the divine characters that must belong to whatever God declares, in whatever form He declares it. If infallible truth and divine authority must characterize every word that the Most High utters when He speaks mouth to mouth with Moses on the mount, or with any of His human creatures to whom in a supernatural manner He has orally declared the message of His will, these must equally belong to every statement that He has caused to be written, in any writing of which He is the author.

In like manner, the parallel assertions by the Scripture of the human authorship that belongs to it, cannot be interpreted in any sense that would infer that the men who penned it had any one of their proper faculties as men suspended in their power, or restricted in their freedom; or that the authorship was in any essential respect different from the authorship of any other book. The only respect in which it differed, in being divinely kept from error, was one in which man received back, for the purposes of inspiration, and during the hour of its supremacy, what had belonged to him at first, and was designed to have been permanently his,—namely, a freedom from error in thought and speech. We have the twofold truth of the divine and the human agency employed in conjunction in the composition of the sacred volume: the conjunction was, in the proper sense of the word, supernatural; and, because it was supernatural, we are all the more free to accept of the fact of the divine authorship in a sense perfectly divine, and of the fact of human authorship in a sense perfectly human.

There are two sets of Scripture testimonies, similar to each other in form and equivalent in force, that bear witness to the supernatural and the natural origin of the written word. Without dealing unjustly by the evidence, we cannot accept of the one without accepting the other, or reject the one

without rejecting the other. We cannot, moreover, accept the result in different senses, with respect to the two propositions. We cannot accept the supernatural authorship as anything less than perfectly supernatural; or the human authorship as anything less than perfectly human. Take the two propositions apart, and each by itself, and it is plain that they rest exactly upon the same kind of evidence, and that the evidence is complete in each case. The relevancy and force of the proof for the one truth is not at all impaired or affected by the relevancy and force of the proof for the other and parallel truth; and there is no reasonable, or indeed possible, way of disposing of the matter, except by receiving both truths in their integrity, without attempting, for the sake of explaining their conjunction, to mutilate the one or other into a theoretical accordance with its neighbour. Whatever difficulty there may be in explaining the possibility of the union of the two in the written word, we cannot be justified in solving it by denying the one or the other.

The force and conclusiveness of the evidence for a plenary inspiration, which asserts that Scripture is all alike the word of God, and also the word of man, may be readily illustrated by the case of some fundamental doctrine of the Bible, established by a parallel mode of proof. We may take, for instance, the doctrine of the proper divinity or Godhead of our Saviour. That He was very God and also very man,—that in His own person He united the divine nature and the human nature in such a sense that He was at the same moment truly divine and not less truly human,—is a doctrine that, in spite of its mysterious character, can be satisfactorily proved from Scripture testimony. The mode of proof usually employed is entirely analogous to the mode of proof for the inspiration of Scripture.

In the first place, we can demonstrate that the mysterious person whom we call Christ, notwithstanding the humanity which belonged to Him, was really and properly divine; and, in the second place, we can prove that, notwithstanding of the divinity in which He was arrayed, He was really



and properly human. That Christ was really divine, we demonstrate from the express affirmations or the indirect testimonies of Scripture to the fact, and by the entire absence from Scripture of any authority or pretence for asserting that He was divine in any lower sense, or that the Godhead belonged to Him in an inferior degree, than when divinity or Godhead is attributed to the Father. Again, that the same Christ, notwithstanding of the different and higher nature that belonged to Him, was really human, we demonstrate in like manner by the express assertions or the indirect testimonies of Scripture to the fact, and by the absence from Scripture of any warrant or ground for alleging that the human nature was His in any different sense or degree from that in which it belongs to any mere man.

On combining these two truths, separately established by separate lines of evidence, into one proposition including them both, we acknowledge the difficulty that immediately arises as to how or in what sense they are to be combined. But arguing that they do not contradict each other, and that the mode of union does not affect the reality of it, we maintain that the two propositions are equally true; that we are warranted and bound to believe both, without attempting to mutilate either of the two doctrines that we may force them into a combination which we can satisfactorily explain; and that therefore we are warranted to say that Christ in His person was really and perfectly divine, and that the same Christ in His person was really and perfectly human. The two doctrines of the perfect Godhead and the perfect manhood of Christ, we are accustomed to assert, do not exclude the one of them the other; but the Godhead and the manhood, each in its integrity and perfection, belong to Him in different senses, so that He is no less God than He is man, and no less man than He is God.

We are not pointing attention at present to the parallelism between the two truths of the constitution of Christ's person and the combination of the divine and human in Scripture. There is indeed, in some points, a striking resem-

blance between the two, although it is not to be forgotten that there is also a fundamental dissimilarity in the mode of the union. Even in the one difference between the human authorship of Scripture and that of any other book,—the difference of the sacred penmen, unlike others, being supernaturally kept from error in their office as inspired men,—we can recognise a parallel, not surely without significance, to that supernatural exemption from evil in all its forms which made Christ to differ in the only point in which He did differ from other men as they are now found. But it is not with any analogy between the two doctrines of the constitution of the Saviour's person and of inspired Scripture that we have to do at present. All that is necessary for our immediate purpose is to note the close resemblance between the kind of evidence, and the proper method of dealing with the evidence in the two cases.

In the instance of inspiration, like as in the instance of the Godhead and the manhood in Christ, we have two lines of evidence, each satisfactory and complete in itself, and leading to different conclusions. We argue that the written word in all its parts is equally divine, because of the express affirmations of Scripture, and its strong testimonies of an indirect kind to the fact; and from the entire absence from the Bible of any warrant or pretence to allege that the divine infallibility and authority attributed to it in one passage is different in degree or kind from that belonging to it in any other, or different from that which belongs to any word coming from God, whether spoken or written. Again, we argue that the sacred volume, in all its parts equally, is human, because of similar testimonies, direct and indirect, to its human authorship; and because of the entire absence from Scripture of any ground or pretence for asserting that the human agency is to be understood in a sense different in one passage from what it is in another, or as different from the human authorship of other books, with the single exception of being free from error. And combining these two truths, separately established by different evidence, into one proposition, we

confess unreservedly the difficulty of reconciling them by any possible explanation ; but we assert that they do not contradict each other,—that the supernatural does not exclude the natural, nor the natural the supernatural,—that they are both of them, in different senses, true of the same written word,—and that we are warranted to affirm of the Bible throughout that it is the authorship of God, and also that it is the authorship of man.

In such a mode of argument there is nothing illegitimate, unless it can be established that the proposition itself is a contradiction in terms, which no evidence of any amount can make credible. But short of this, while admitting that there is a mystery in inspiration which we cannot understand, we are justified in applying to it the methods and principles of evidence applicable to other doctrines. The fact that the union of the divine and human in Scripture is supernatural, is enough to make the man who admits the reality of the supernatural, in any case, to pause before asserting its impossibility in this.

Taking, then, the whole Scripture information on the subject, and reducing it to the form of a dogmatic statement,—giving effect to both classes of testimonies equally, and accepting the truth which each in its turn establishes,—combining them, without attempting to explain the combination,—we have a Bible equally of God and equally of man. If this be the result of a fair interpretation of the statements of Scripture, and the only conclusion which a proper examination of the evidence warrants, there are two positions which we may lay down as satisfactorily established, and which it may be well distinctly to enunciate, in order that we may the better understand the meaning of a plenary inspiration. It is only stating the same doctrine in another form of words.

*First*, Whatever is necessary to, or distinctive of, the divine element in Scripture, in its reality and perfection, belongs to the sacred volume in virtue of its inspiration ; and whatever is inconsistent with that element is excluded.

*Secondly*, Whatever is necessary to, or distinctive of, the human element in Scripture, in its reality and perfection, also belongs to the sacred volume in virtue of its inspiration; and whatever is inconsistent with that character is excluded.

These two propositions are plainly implied in the views of inspiration which the Scripture information and evidence have induced us to adopt; and it may serve both to illustrate and confirm these views, to indicate their bearing upon some of the familiar and prevalent schemes of inspiration advocated in the popular literature and current theology of the day. No idea of inspiration can be scriptural which does not embrace both the views now referred to, and is not consistent with the truth that the supernatural in the written word was not limited, but only expressed, by the natural, and that the human was not suspended or neutralized, but only guarded from error, by the divine. There is room and warrant in the Scripture doctrine for both these views.

1. First of all, those theories of inspiration which draw a distinction between different kinds and degrees of it in the written word, are plainly inconsistent with the first of the two positions that have been laid down,—namely, that whatever is necessary to, or distinctive of, the divine element in its reality and perfection, belongs to the sacred volume in virtue of its inspiration. Such theories accordingly proceed upon the idea that the divine agency in Scripture is supplementary to the human, and not co-extensive with it throughout,—the one being exclusive, and not inclusive, of the other. The plea for the adoption of such theories is founded on the allegation that much of what is written in Scripture was known, or might have been known, to the writers without the aid of supernatural endowment, and might have been recorded with a less measure of inspiration than other truths; or recorded with no inspiration at all. The office assigned to the divine agency in recording the written word is to supplement here and there the defects of the sacred writers with an assistance measured out in an exact proportion to the measure of their defects,—a larger amount of the divine

power being necessary when only a lesser amount of the human could be applied to the task; and conversely, an inferior degree of the divine being lent when a superior degree of the human could be bestowed upon the work.

Under whatever names or modifications such artificial and gratuitous theories may be advocated, they are obviously inconsistent with the fact that the supernatural element, in its reality and perfection as supernatural, was present throughout the whole of Scripture to give to all of it the equal seal of divine truth and the like stamp of divine authority, whether or not it could have been written partially or wholly by men; and that God is the author of His own word, not in different senses, but only in one. The allegation that any part of Scripture, even in the case where the facts or truths were best known beforehand to the writers, could have been written without supernatural inspiration so as to have been what it now is,—the very truth of God, and not of man,—and to have carried with it what it now carries,—a divine and not a human authority,—is an allegation entirely unfounded. But apart from this, the theories which proceed on such an assumption, and parcel out the various degrees and kinds of inspiration, according to the different nature of the truths or facts to be recorded, are plainly irreconcilable with either the presence or the perfection of the divine element throughout.

If God be the author of the recorded word in the same sense in which He is the author of any oral statement He ever made, or might have made, face to face with any of His creatures; if He is present as much and as truly in His written as in His spoken revelation, the human hand that wrote not superseding or neutralizing the divine power,—then it is impossible to say of any sentence or truth of Scripture that it is more divine than another, or that God is present in less degree or less perfectly in one page than in the whole. An inspiration of various degrees and kinds in the sacred volume is irreconcilable with our first position, that whatever is necessary to, or distinctive of, the divine element in Scripture, in its reality and



perfection, belongs to it in virtue of its inspiration; and that whatever is inconsistent with that element is excluded.

2. The same position excludes, as inconsistent with the reality and perfection of the divine element in Scripture, all those theories which reduce inspiration to the level of a mere inward and subjective illumination of the religious nature of man. Whether that illumination is produced by the ordinary operations of the Spirit of God on the reason and conscience of all, or by the gracious operations of the Spirit on the renewed nature of the Christian, it is broadly to be distinguished from the results of that supernatural agency which endowed prophets with power to write the infallible word of Scripture. Properly speaking, both a supernatural revelation and a supernatural inspiration are denied by such theories. The enlargement and elevation of the religious consciousness from within, and the quickening of the spiritual apprehension of a man, to enable him to discover truth for himself, come far short of the Scripture idea of revelation, which is a presentation of supernatural truth from God. The transference of the truth so discovered to the written page by the unaided powers of the discoverer, is a very different thing from the scriptural view of inspiration, which is the recording with infallible accuracy, under the guidance of the Divine Spirit, of the revelation of God given for the purpose.

An inspiration which is nothing more than the inward illumination of the Christian by a grace common to all Christians, might account for the human and fallible record of the thoughts and feelings and experience of the believer in the sacred volume. It could never account for the infallible transcript of the mind of God in the page of man, nor explain how the divine idea from above met with the human idea from beneath, and the objective truth from without with the subjective faith from within, and the two became one in the actual record of Scripture. Such a theory of inspiration amounts to a practical denial both of a revelation of truth from God in heaven, and of an inspiration of that same truth in the language written by men. It separates the Bible from

the supernatural source from which its truths are drawn, and from the divine power which guards the record of these in its page from error ; and it leaves the sacred volume with nothing beyond the character of a human thing, both as to the truths it records, and the form in which they are recorded. Such a view of the written word is plainly irreconcilable with our first position, that whatever is necessary to, or distinctive of, the divine element in Scripture, in its reality and perfection, belongs to the sacred volume in virtue of its inspiration ; and that whatever is inconsistent with that character is excluded.

3. But our second position—that whatever is necessary to, or distinctive of, the human element in the authorship of Scripture, must belong to it in virtue of its inspiration—marks out as inadequate all those theories which regard the divine revelation as first given by God, and then recorded in the sacred volume through men, but apart from the free and ordinary exercise of their full powers of mind and will and action as men. What has been called mechanical inspiration, is excluded by this position. It is plainly at variance with the most familiar features presented to our view by the structure, thought, and language of Scripture,—all of which bear witness to the fact, that the authorship of the sacred volume is one in which the human element, in its integrity and perfection, is uniformly present, the same as in the case of any ordinary book. This is true, even in those cases in which, as in many of the prophetic portions of the Bible, the meaning of what was given to the sacred penmen to record was partially unknown to them. Their entire powers of mind and will and activity as men, were engaged about the truths not fully understood,—although of course differently from the case of truths understood by them,—as really as they would have been had they been writing down truths not understood, given to them to record by a fellow-man ; and any theory of inspiration which abridges the freedom or denies the perfection of the human element in the written word, is irreconcilably at variance with Scripture views on the subject.

But this censure is not to be confined to what have been stigmatized as mechanical theories, which supersede the powers of man's rational and spiritual being, and make inspired prophets unintelligent instruments in the hand of the Spirit, first unconsciously to receive and then unconsciously to record the revelation presented to them. The charge of reducing the sacred penmen to the level of machines, has been brought unjustly against the doctrine of plenary inspiration, as if it did not include, as an essential element in it, the human agency in its entirety and freedom, and truly make the Scriptures to be the word of man as certainly as they are the word of God. The second proposition that I have laid down as a proper declaration of the Scripture doctrine of plenary inspiration, is itself the strongest denial of the mechanical theory; and if it is not a contradiction in terms, or an impossibility in point of fact, to assert the union of the human and divine elements, each in its integrity and perfection, in Scripture, the doctrine of plenary inspiration cannot be justly liable to the accusation.

But more than this. The doctrine of the plenary inspiration of the Bible, which regards it as all in one sense man's, and all in another sense God's, is the only view that gives full place to the human element in Scripture,—all theories except itself more or less putting aside or impairing its perfection. Other views, such as that of an inspiration different in degree or kind as respects different truths or portions of Scripture, make the sacred volume to be, in some of its passages or statements, no more than partly human, just as they make it in others to be no more than partly divine. Such theories mutilate both the supernatural and the natural character of Scripture equally, in adjusting the respective places that they occupy, or the respective works that the two agencies of God and man actually perform in the joint result. At one time they make the natural to limit and curtail the supernatural; at another time they make the divine to limit and curtail the human. Those deniers of plenary inspiration who discharge from the written word the divine and miraculous agency of the Spirit

altogether, and make the Bible to be nothing but a human writing, cannot be accused of limiting the human authorship when they assign to it the whole result. But if, while admitting the intervention of God in a supernatural manner by His Spirit, it is asserted that it is different in different portions of Scripture, according as the human authorship is more or less able for the work assigned to it, and that the hand of man is present in the exact proportion that the hand of God is absent, or, conversely, that the divine is present in precise degree as the human is wanting, the assertion amounts to a plain denial of the human agency not less than of the divine in its perfection and freedom.

Unless we are prepared to adopt the theory that the Bible is nothing but the composition of man, alone and exclusively, there is no other view except that of a plenary inspiration which conserves equally the divine and human element in the recorded word. In advocating that doctrine, we assert that all Scripture is in one sense of God ; we also assert that, in another sense, all Scripture is of man. No view including in it the supernatural agency in the composition of Scripture, except this view, makes full room for the human also. The only question that can arise,—a question to be afterwards discussed,—is as to the possibility of the union of the two in their freedom and integrity. Other theories are irreconcilable with the second position we laid down,—namely, that whatever is necessary to, or distinctive of, the human element in its reality and perfection, belongs to the sacred volume in virtue of its inspiration ; and whatever is inconsistent with it is excluded.

The question of the respective places occupied by the divine and by the human elements in the written word, furnishes what may be regarded as a test of the soundness of the views of inspiration that are entertained. By the advocates of a plenary inspiration, the question is solved in one way ; by the advocates of all other theories it is solved in another and an opposite way. Those who maintain the plenary inspiration of Scripture, assert that both the natural

and supernatural elements are fully present throughout the whole of the sacred volume; that where the human is, there is the divine, and, conversely, where the divine is, there is the human, each in like measure and perfection; that the office of the Spirit is not to supplement what is deficient in man, in the way of making up what is wanting in his ability to write an inspired Bible,—the one agency being active where the other is not active,—but rather to add to every truth and fact freely written by man the seal of divine truth and authority, being co-extensive with all that he has written,—so that there is no truth or word of Scripture that has in it more of God or more of man than any other, but all alike are equally of God and equally of man. The agency of God in the composition of the Scriptures did not lose anything of its supernatural perfection in allying itself to the agency of man, but only found expression in words kindred to our understandings and feelings; while, on the other hand, the agency of man in the authorship of the written word was not superseded or fettered in its freedom, but only infallibly guarded from error, by its alliance with the divine. The two in their integrity are equally present throughout.

On the other hand, those who maintain an inspiration restricted to a gracious illumination of the religious consciousness of man common to all Christians, while admitting the human element in Scripture, wholly set aside the divine in the sense of a supernatural agency contributing to the result. Those, again, who admit that agency in connection with the Bible, but distribute it in different degrees over the various portions of the text, according to the nature of the truths recorded, and in proportion to the greater or less ability of man to record them without it, may admit the existence, but deny the integrity and perfection, of both the human element and the divine in the product of the written word. Once more, those who maintain that the sacred volume is inspired in certain departments, but not in others, may concede the reality of the human authorship throughout; but to the extent that inspiration is limited in its range,



to that extent they deny both the existence and the completeness of the divine. All the views of inspiration short of a plenary, are founded upon the denial of the divine or of the human element, either as to their reality or their perfection.

Yet neither can be denied without injury done to our view of the inspired word. The share which the supernatural agency of the Spirit has in the result of a written Bible, cannot be repudiated without changing the whole character of the sacred volume as the word of truth and power and life to man. The share which the human agency has in its authorship cannot be denied, without it ceasing to be a communication from God, adapted to the understanding, the feelings, and the entire nature of man. Shut out the divine element from inspiration, or mutilate it of its completeness, so that it shall be no more than partial in itself, or partial in its application to the Scripture volume, and it is severed from the source of infallible truth; it is no more the record of a divine revelation unerringly transferred from the mind of God to the page of the written record by supernatural power; and it ceases to be an objective standard of belief and practice to men. It becomes a copy of the Christian consciousness and experience,—the beliefs and thoughts and feelings of the men who wrote it; a record of what they believe about divine truth, but not that truth itself as it came from the mind of God, guarded by Himself from addition or mixture of error. Again, shut out the human element from inspiration, or fetter it in its freedom and perfection, so that the book which the authors of Scripture wrote shall be no more a true expression of the mind of the men who wrote it, in the same way that any other book exhibits the mind of its writer, and the Bible loses its magic virtue as an appeal to our understanding and hearts,—an image of human thought and feeling fitted to kindle the answer of thought and feeling in others. In ceasing to be the utterance of men, it is disowned by the sympathies of men.

The supernatural and the natural, each in its peculiarity and entirety,—the divine and the human, both in their

fulness and freedom,—the objection from without, and the subjection from within,—must be combined to make up a Bible such as we actually have it. The divine idea coming down from God, and true as it came from Him, must meet with the human idea fresh from the heart of man, and purified from its imperfection; and the two must become one in order to constitute the inspired Scripture.

## CHAPTER XI.

### PSYCHOLOGICAL OBJECTIONS.

THE Scripture view of inspiration is one which represents the sacred volume, not as exclusively divine, and not as exclusively human, but as both equally and throughout,—the two elements or characters meeting together in the written word in a union which is harmonious and plenary. In saying this, nothing more is meant than that the essential features of a divine word or writing—namely, infallible truth and absolute authority—belong to the same volume which possesses those familiar and essential marks of human authorship that characterize any ordinary book. All the information that we have about the matter in Scripture leads to this conclusion, which is not so much a theory, as the statement of a fact proved by its own appropriate evidence.

There is no attempt in Scripture to explain this fact, or to account for it, beyond the intimation that the Bible is the result of the operation of the Spirit of God upon its authors,—an intimation which does not in the least serve to solve the mystery, but only refers it back to the more general mystery of the supernatural. How infallible truth should be the product of the writings of fallible men, or how divine authority should belong to their lightest word, is a question that is not answered, except by the general affirmation that they spoke as they were moved by the Spirit. Again, how the divine authorship of Scripture can consist with the apparent imperfections which are found in its text, is a second question which the Bible has been at no pains to resolve, but has left to its readers, guided by the ordinary principles of criticism

applicable in other cases, to deal with. From both these quarters objections have been drawn to the doctrine of a plenary inspiration of Scripture. The one class of objections is connected with the writers, and the other with the writings. It is alleged that the doctrine of a supernatural power employed in the production of Scripture, and infallibly keeping its writers from error, is inconsistent with their nature as men, and inconsistent, therefore, with the true human authorship of what, under such an influence, they wrote. It is further alleged that such a divine influence supernaturally securing the result of a perfect Bible, is inconsistent with the actual phenomena which the sacred text exhibits. The objections that have been brought against the doctrine of a plenary inspiration may be readily classified under these two main heads. There is first the psychological objection, and secondly, the critical objections to the doctrine of plenary inspiration.

Reserving for further discussion the critical objections, let us consider the psychological objection usually urged against a plenary inspiration of Scripture. It can be stated in a very few words.

The assertion of a supernatural power on the part of God, securing, through the minds and pens of the inspired men, and without possibility of failure, the result of an infallible text, is held by many to be inconsistent with the free exercise of their own rational and spiritual nature. A divine agency presiding over every step of the process by which the end is attained, and directing every step with such absolute control as to make the end certain, is represented as a doctrine which reduces the writer to the condition of a machine, having its movements ordered by a force from without, and obeying a law that leaves no room for the freedom and activity of a conscious and intelligent being. And hence the view of inspiration which Scripture, as we believe, undoubtedly teaches, has been charged with making inspired prophets unconscious instruments in the hand of God, and their writings the mechanical product of their pens, and not of their minds.

‘All the miracles,’ says Coleridge, ‘which the legends of monk or rabbi contain, can scarcely be put in competition, on the score of complication, inexplicableness, the absence of all intelligible use or purpose, and of circuitous self-frustration, with those that must be assumed by the maintainers of this doctrine, in order to give effect to the series of miracles by which all the nominal composers of the Hebrew nation before the time of Ezra, of whom there are any remains, were successively transformed into *automaton* compositors,—so that the original text should be, in sentiment, image, word, syntax, and composition, an exact impression of the divine copy.’<sup>1</sup>

‘Theologians,’ says the late Archdeacon Hare, adopting and quoting the language of a German author, ‘have not unfrequently been guilty of a gross error, with regard to the biblical idea of inspiration, from looking upon it as mechanical instead of dynamical. . . . Hence theologians ought never to have adopted or encouraged the crude notion, that persons under inspiration were like so many *drawers*, wherein the Holy Ghost put such and such things, which they then took out as something ready-made, and laid before the world, so that their recipiency, with reference to the Spirit inspiring them, was like that of a letter-box.’<sup>2</sup>

The objection, then, to the plenary inspiration of Scripture, in so far as regards the relation of the supernatural agency of God to the inspired man, is, that it is incompatible with the use of man’s faculties, according to their ordinary laws ; that it supersedes the exercise of his active, rational, and spiritual nature, so as to make the writers of Scripture not the authors but the copyists of what they wrote ; and that it reduces the prophets to the condition of automatons, with as little will or intelligence or freedom in what they recorded, as the pens moved by their hands, or the letter-boxes in which they deposited their writings. If this objection were well founded,—if it were true that the divine agency, when it took into alliance with itself the human in the composition of

<sup>1</sup> Coleridge : *Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, p. 79.

<sup>2</sup> Hare : *Mission of Comforter*, p. 500.



Scripture, superseded its powers, or abridged it of its freedom, fettering or forcing the rational and spiritual nature into a mechanical accordance with a power foreign to its character, and destructive of it,—then, indeed, such a doctrine would be repudiated, both by the express declarations and by the whole form and structure of the inspired volume. The human individuality of the sacred writers,—the peculiarities of character, thought, and speech which belonged to them as men and as authors,—are not only stamped upon every page that they wrote, but are essential to the very object that was in view by inspiration, as being the expression of the divine idea in the form and manner alone fitted to reach with effect the human understanding and heart. If the plenary agency of God, in His written word, is incompatible with the plenary agency of man; if their co-existence in the same volume is an impossibility in the nature of things, the objection is fatal to the doctrine of inspiration that has been advocated, and no amount of evidence could establish it.

In considering the bearing of such an objection, it must be frankly admitted that Scripture has not explained, and that we cannot explain, how it is that the union of the divine and human in inspiration has been brought about; or how, indeed, it is possible, without the one limiting or superseding either wholly or partially the other. We cannot pretend to tell how the almighty power of God moved the minds or hands of inspired men to write His word, without interfering with their freedom; nor, conversely, how the human authors of Scripture possessed this entire freedom in what they wrote, and yet were all the time under the supernatural control of the Spirit. We have no explanation to give of how God put His own infallible word into their hearts, and caused it to be recorded in His book, and yet the word that they recorded was their own; or, reversing the statement, how, drawing from their own minds, they committed to writing their own thoughts, and yet they were identical with the thoughts of God. There is nothing analogous or similar to this in the experience of man. There is nothing in Scripture that supplies any

solution of the difficulty : neither from the word of God, that tells us of the fact, nor from the experience of other men, have we any materials furnished even to alleviate the difficulty.

But the question is, whether the difficulty of explaining the fact is sufficient to set aside the evidence for the fact. Is the divine agency so inconsistent with or so exclusive of the human, and the human so inconsistent with and exclusive of the divine, that they cannot possibly co-exist, each in its completeness, in the sacred volume, so that it shall be at once wholly in one sense divine, and wholly in another sense human ? Must the supernatural power that gave the inspiration necessarily limit or supersede the natural power that wrote the inspired page, so that we cannot, without a contradiction in terms, or asserting an impossibility in point of fact, assert that the Bible is both the word of God and the word of man ? This is plainly the question that must be discussed in dealing with the psychological objection to plenary inspiration. If the union of the supernatural and the natural in the Scripture page be simply an impossibility, the objection cannot but be sustained as valid ; if it is not an impossibility, but only a mystery which we cannot explain, the objection may still come to be regarded as a difficulty more or less formidable, to be accepted and set over against the positive evidence for inspiration ; but it cannot be regarded as fatal to it.

That it is not within the limits of almighty power, or that it is impossible for God, to make one man the instrument of infallibly conveying to another the revelation given to himself, without uncreating him as a man, and destroying or suspending his human powers, is a proposition which perhaps few, except those who deny the supernatural in any form or circumstances, will be prepared to maintain. The question of the limits of the supernatural, and of the extent of the range competent to it, is one in regard to which we have no means of judging one way or other, beyond what may be furnished by certain fundamental beliefs native to the human mind, and

inseparable from it. There are a very few beliefs primary and universal in the nature of man, and necessary to every act and judgment of the mind, which may justify us in setting bounds to the range of supernatural power, and inferring that beyond these it is impossible for it to go, or at least impossible for us to believe that it can go. There are intuitive convictions, to affirm or believe the opposite of which would be a contradiction in terms, and an impossibility. But beyond the narrow limits of such convictions, we have no ground or warrant to say that anything is impossible to supernatural power; the fact that it is supernatural, is a sufficient answer to the allegation that it is not possible. We have no argument at present with the deniers of the supernatural in any shape, or for any purpose. But with those who admit the supernatural at all, it can hardly be a question that it is a possible thing with God, who originated and still orders the laws of man's nature, to operate through these laws, and not in contradiction to them, in such a way as, without suspending or neutralizing the human powers of inspired men, to make them the instruments of infallibly conveying His mind and will to His creatures.

The fact of a supernatural revelation given by God, and received by the prophet called upon to record it,—a fact admitted by both parties in the debate as to inspiration,—is itself a warrant to believe that the union of the divine agency with the human, without suspending or setting aside the latter, is not only not an impossibility, but an actual fact realized in the process. The first, and indeed the most important, step in the process by which the truth which dwelt in the mind of God is transferred with unimpaired purity to the page of the written word, is that by which the divine agency, operating on the mind of the prophet, awakens and enables it to receive the revelation given by God. In the presentation by God, and the reception by man, of the truth revealed, there is the twofold agency of the divine and human will and power co-operating and combining to the result; so that the truth communicated

shall be intelligently apprehended, at least to the extent of fitting the prophet to record for the benefit of others what he has himself received from God. This is the process of revelation admitted by all parties as a fact, even when the second step of the recording of it, not by the unaided powers of the prophet, but by supernatural inspiration, is denied.

And if this first step in the process be admitted, we have in it an example of the union of the supernatural power of God and the natural powers of man, conspiring to the result of the intelligent apprehension of the revelation given, without the human being overborne or suspended by the combination. There is the active and voluntary co-operation of the mind of the prophet with the supernatural act of the Revealer, in order that the revelation may be received, even when the truth given may be only partially understood in its own import, or understood not in its own import, but only in so far as it is necessary in order to it being recorded in Scripture. If, in the act of receiving from God, in a supernatural manner, a communication of His truth, the ordinary laws of the human mind are not set aside or contradicted, but employed as the medium through which the mind of the prophet is approached and instructed in the knowledge of the revelation, it affords an example of the very thing which is objected against in inspiration, when the divine and human agencies, each according to its own nature and laws, meet together for the purpose of producing the written word.

But if the impossibility in itself of such a union cannot be asserted, neither is the difficulty of explaining it any bar in the way of accepting the fact, or indeed any legitimate presumption against it, except in a very slender degree.

Even where the facts to be believed belong to the class of ordinary and not supernatural truths, the difficulty or impossibility of explaining them is never accounted a conclusive, or even a serious, obstacle to the reception of them. Among the truths most familiarly known and accepted as undoubted truths, there are thousands of which no explanation can be given, beyond this, that they are facts established by sufficient

and appropriate evidence; and the difficulty of explaining them, or reconciling them with other facts no less undoubted, we are content to put down to the score of our own ignorance, believing that, though unexplained, they are not inexplicable, and that, were our ignorance removed, there would be no difficulty felt in the matter. The presumption against such facts, arising out of the impossibility we find in explaining them, is to be measured by the presumption, that what we in our ignorance are unable to solve, does not admit of any solution.

But in the case of inspiration, the facts to be received, and which we are required to explain, are not ordinary facts of which we might be expected to know something, and to give some account, but supernatural facts, of which we know nothing, and can give no account. The presumption arising against these facts from the circumstance that we cannot understand them in themselves, or in their compatibility with others, sinks into insignificance as compared with the case of facts non-supernatural. In consequence of their supernatural character, there must be mysteries attaching to them not to be solved by the experience or analogies of nature, and the existence of which can constitute no presumption against them; on the contrary, the absence of such mysteries would turn the presumption the other way. In order to prove the impossibility of a union between the divine and human agencies in inspiration, such as would leave the powers of the inspired man free and unimpaired, it is not enough to assert that we cannot distinctly show the consistency of the two. To prove such an impossibility, we must be prepared to assert that we can distinctly show how they are positively inconsistent. Our mere ignorance of how the two things may be compatible, is but a very slender probability against their compatibility. The only relevant and conclusive argument would be founded on a full knowledge of how they are incompatible. And this knowledge the very nature of the case forbids us to have.

The union of the divine and human in inspiration is one of



those mysteries which stamp with the character of pretence all our assertions of a thorough knowledge of it, either in the way of denying or affirming its existence *a priori*, and apart from the positive information of Scripture. The very same reason that prevents us from asserting that we know how the two are consistent, prevents us, in like manner, from asserting that we know how the two are inconsistent. The mystery that forbids us to see in what way the divine and human elements can be reconciled in their integrity and freedom, forbids us also to see in what way they are irreconcilable. We cannot prove a negative in the question, for the very same reason that we cannot prove an affirmative. All such *a priori* reasonings are out of place on either side; and we must be contented to take inspiration as a fact to be known only from Scripture, and to be judged of, in so far as regards its reality and nature, only from the information that Scripture furnishes.

Although there is nothing in Scripture like an attempt to explain the mode of the union of the supernatural and natural in the inspired word, yet there is enough in what we are told of the source of each, to forbid the presumption of asserting its impossibility. The supernatural character that belongs to the sacred volume throughout its inspired page, has its source in the one Spirit who, amid His different ministrations to men, has moved holy men to write, and guarded their writings from error, through means of His miraculous agency. But the fact is not to be forgotten, and is full of significance in connection with this argument, that the human character that belongs to the same volume, and has been impressed upon it by the agency of man, moving in the exercise of his common powers of mind, is due to the same Spirit who, through His ordinary ministrations to men, sustains the life and actuates the rational and spiritual being of all. The supernatural and the natural agencies employed in the production of the written word come from the same source; and different although they be in their character and effects, are resolved into a higher unity through means of that one Divine

Spirit that moves and operates in them both, and orders and fashions both to the one end in view.

Whatever distinction there may be between the divine and the human in the process of working out the inspired word, they are not so distinct but that they originated in the same Spirit, and are pervaded by His one power. To affirm that their workings are inconsistent and incompatible the one with the other, is to forget that it is the one Spirit of God that moves in the department of the natural and of the supernatural alike,—that they are but different modifications of His one almighty power,—and that, one in the origin from which they proceed, they can also be made one in their movement towards their common object. The diversities of operations of the same Divine Agent can never be contradictory the one to the other, or militate against each other's perfection and freedom when equally employed by Him to bring about the joint issue at which they aim. In the fact that the supernatural element and the natural, found together in the process and the product of inspiration, proceed from the same undivided Spirit, we see provision made for the possibility of combining them in the same result.

But there is another consideration that cannot be overlooked in the discussion as between the friends and the opponents of plenary inspiration. The difficulty of conceiving or explaining the union of the supernatural and the natural in the person of the inspired man, and in the character attaching to the inspired writing, without interfering with the entire humanity impressed upon both, is a difficulty which, whatever may be the extent of it, is not peculiar to the doctrine of a plenary inspiration. It is connected with every system of inspiration, whether plenary or not plenary, which does not discharge from the sacred page the supernatural element altogether, and reduce the Scripture record to the level of a purely human writing. The combination of the divine power with the human power, in any manner and to any extent, for the purpose of co-operating to effect the authorship of the written word, lays open the system, which

anyhow implies such a combination, to the force of the same objection that is commonly supposed to strike with sole effect against the doctrine of plenary inspiration. The mystery of such a union and co-operation is not got rid of by restricting it to certain passages of Scripture and denying it to others, or by distinguishing between greater and less degrees of supernatural power entering into the combination with the natural.

Take the case of that theory of inspiration which asserts that some departments of Scripture are not inspired, while others are. It is plain that, in such a system, the difficulty is shut out of one passage of the Bible, only to reappear in all its force in another; while it is not pretended that there is any difference as regards the marks and characteristics of the human authorship in the one as compared with the other.

Or take the theory which distinguishes between the amount and degree of the supernatural in different portions of the sacred volume, assigning to one a larger measure of it than is assigned to another. Here again the same difficulty encounters us as before. If the supernatural in any measure or manner is present, co-operating with the natural powers of the author, and necessary to the result of the inspired writing that he composes, the same question is instantly raised as to how the divine power, in whatever way it is meted out or distributed, can combine with the human power without controlling and overbearing the movements of the latter, and abridging it of its freedom, and without interfering with the spontaneous action of the rational and spiritual nature of the writer.

Or take, once more, the theory which restricts inspiration to an inward process of elevating and enlarging the spiritual intuitions of the sacred penman, so as to enable him to discover divine truth for himself, and then, out of his own knowledge and belief and experience of it, to record by his own unaided hand the truth he has found. If this process is anything more than the gracious teaching which every Christian man in his measure enjoys; if the supernatural, in the true sense of the term, is not excluded from it, but is really present, then

its presence, in whatever way, in connection with the ordinary powers of the sacred writer, exposes the theory to the same objection. It still remains to be explained how the supernatural agency can act upon the mind, and yet neither derange nor supersede its functions ; and how the divine power can work out its own result in co-operation with, or through the faculties of, the inspired man, and yet these move and operate all the time in their spontaneous and natural order.

Whatever theory of inspiration be adopted, if it asserts a real co-operation between God and man, between the supernatural and the natural, in the composition of the sacred volume, it lies exposed to the same objection, in all its force, which has been commonly supposed to be exclusively chargeable upon the doctrine of a plenary inspiration. There is only one way of getting rid of the objection, and that is by denying that any such co-operation exists ; and so reducing the sacred volume to the level of an exclusively human writing, or elevating it to the rank of an exclusively divine one. Anything between these two extremes must still face the mystery that ever attaches to the union, in the same work, of God and man. If the Bible were nothing but a human book, there would be no supernatural element to bring with it its mysteries and its difficulties. If the Bible were nothing but a divine writing, like that graven on the tables of stone, there would be the single difficulty of the supernatural ; but there would be no human element in combination to aggravate the difficulty, and make it still more mysterious. But the presence of both, and the combination of both to one end, in whatever proportion they unite, or in whatever manner they co-operate, immediately gives rise to the question, which we cannot answer, as to how the union can be effected and maintained in accordance with the proper character and distinctive working of each. This difficulty is not more, and is not less, a difficulty, upon one theory of the combination than upon another ; it is inseparable from the union in any form, and cannot be explained upon any one system better than upon the rest, because equally inexplicable upon any ; and the

doctrine of a plenary inspiration cannot justly be made alone to bear the responsibility of a mystery which, with all its darkness, belongs alike to all.

But the general fact, out of which the objection under consideration emerges, is one to be recognised and confessed much beyond the range of the Scripture volume, and in other quarters than in theories, perfect or imperfect, of inspiration. The proper answer to the objection so commonly brought by the opponents of a plenary inspiration against the possibility of it, is not so much to retort the accusation against those who bring it, and to prove that every scheme that does not deny inspiration altogether is equally open to the charge, but rather to show that the difficulty, whatever it be, resolves itself into a more general question, and is merged in the one grand mystery of the relation of the Infinite and the finite in every department of being. The union of the divine and the human in inspired Scripture, out of which the objection arises, is not a solitary fact, witnessed nowhere else, and having no resembling parallel in other instances. It is not singular or peculiar to the case of inspiration; neither is the difficulty connected with it only to be met with there. Indeed, there is no difficulty attaching to the fact of inspiration, in consequence of the union, which is not in all its force to be witnessed, and in point of fact is not acknowledged to exist, in manifold other examples of such union, found in every department of God's operations.

The frequency, indeed, of the occurrence of this union, and the number of times in which the difficulty is exemplified in connection with it, will not in the least contribute to dissipate the mystery, or to explain it away. But the number of cases in which it is witnessed and confessed may serve to meet the objection commonly brought against the doctrine of plenary inspiration, and to prove that there is no real difficulty attaching to the doctrine, not to be found in a thousand other examples of truths familiar to us, and no greater degree of the difficulty, than belongs to them.

In meeting the objection brought against plenary inspira-



tion in this way, we make no hazardous or unwise attempt to explain the difficulty on which it is founded. Neither Scripture nor reason would warrant such an attempt. The mystery of God, acting with His supernatural power in combination and gracious co-operation with the weakness of man, in order to give to man the infallible assurance of His word, is one to be left in silence, where Scripture has left it, as one of the secret things that belong unto the Lord. But the objection founded on the mysterious union may, without solving the difficulty, be met in the only way in which such an objection can be met,—namely, by showing that it is not a solitary case, but one of a class general and co-extensive with all the working of God in connection with the creature; and that it is exemplified in all its unsolved difficulty in every department of His works.

In short, we would argue in reference to the mystery of inspiration, as Butler argues in reference to many other mysteries connected with the sacred volume. We would show that the difficulty of inspiration has its numberless analogies in other quarters where a similar difficulty is found to exist, and yet where the truths in connection with which it is found are not objected to or denied on that account. That union of the divine with the human, to accomplish the joint product of the written word, which has been declared to be impossible, is a union reproduced and exemplified in parallel cases in the department of nature, of grace, and of the supernatural. Differing as these cases do in other respects, they are the same in all that is essential to the analogy, so as to constitute them proper parallels to the fact of the inspiration by God of the human instruments He employed to record His revelation; the divine agency and the human, in all the instances, being combined, and co-operating to the one end wrought out. The same difficulty is found in all. It exists in the same degree in all. It is a mystery equally inexplicable in all. It is accepted as a fact in all, and believed without hesitation in all, except in the one case of inspiration. In every other instance, the difficulty of explaining the fact

is not allowed for a moment to neutralize the evidence in its favour, or to prevent the belief of it. And, standing on the ground of these analogies, we affirm that the objection to the doctrine of the plenary inspiration of Scripture, because of the fact of the union of the divine agency in its perfection with the human in its freeness, is no adequate or proper argument against its truth.

1. In the department of the supernatural, we have analogies sufficient to meet the difficulty charged against the doctrine of plenary inspiration.

There is a remarkable parallel, often noticed in connection with this controversy, between the case of the union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Christ, and the case of inspiration. The circumstance that the same term, *the Word of God*, is used in Scripture to denote both the Eternal Son, and the revelation contained in the Bible, is itself sufficient to call attention to the analogy. In seeking to understand the extent and limits of the similitude between the two, we are, however, treading on the confines of a mystery with which it is hardly possible to deal too guardedly. There are certain points of analogy which justify the application of the same title to the incarnate Son and to the written word; but there are also points of obvious distinction. In His divine nature, the Son, proceeding from the Father by eternal generation, was the expression of the Father's wisdom; in His revelation in the flesh, the Son was the manifestation to an intelligent universe of the mind of Him that sent Him: in both aspects He was the Word of God. In the fulness of that divine wisdom which is contained in its page, as reflecting the image and mind of the Revealer, the Bible is also a manifestation of Him who has inspired it, speaking to us in language not its own, but His; and so it also is the word of God.

But while in so far there is a manifest parallelism between the two cases, recognised in the common name given to both, yet there is also a manifest distinction, not to be overlooked without injury to the one or other, or both. In the case of the incarnation of the Eternal Son, the manifestation of the

Godhead was a personal manifestation ; the wisdom of God was revealed in the person of Christ ; the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us with all the characters and relations of personality. The union of the divine and human was realized in the fact of a Person to whom belonged all the proper attributes and distinctive character both of God and of man. In the case of the manifestation of eternal wisdom in human language, the manifestation was impersonal ; the Most High God revealed Himself not in a living person, but verbally ; and the word of God was seen and known among us in the impersonal revelation of our written speech. The union of the divine and human characters was realized, not, as before, in the Son made flesh, but in that written word, to which belong all the real attributes and distinctive properties of the word of God and of the word of man.

The revelation of the eternal will and mind of the Father, both personally and impersonally—both in Christ and in Christ's written record—has filled up the measure of the divine manifestations. The two are like to each other, as being both revelations of the wisdom that was of old with God ; they are unlike as to the form of the revelation, the one being personal and the other verbal. But in so far as regards the revelations themselves, whether personal or verbal, they equally bear in them the twofold character of divine and human, the union being completed and perfect in both. In the case of Christ, there belonged to all He said and did that very peculiarity which we ascribe to Scripture. Both in His words and in His actions there was a double character : they were the words and actions of God, and they were the words and actions of a man ; they were as perfectly divine as if they had not been human, and they were as perfectly human as if they had not been divine. The divine character that attached to all that He said and did, neither superseded nor destroyed the human character attaching to it ; and the human character did not exclude or limit the divine.

In asserting this analogy between the union of the divine and

human in Christ, and the union of the same two characters in Scripture, it is not necessary to assert that the mode in which it was effected or exemplified was the same. It was personal in Christ; and it was verbal in Scripture. The two agencies of the divine power and the human wrought through the channel of one personality in the case of our Saviour; they were exemplified in a manner more intimate than in any other instance, being identified in the person of Him who was alike God and man. But the two agencies, although not exemplified in the same manner, nor identified in one person, when co-operating together in inspiration, yet as truly and perfectly meet in the one and undivided result of the written word in Scripture; of which, not less than of the spoken word of Christ, it can be said that it is both the word of God and the word of man.

The broad and obvious distinction which Scripture itself teaches us to assert between the personal union of the divine and human characters in Christ Jesus, and the verbal union of the divine and human characters in inspired Scripture, does not so far separate between the two cases as to break up the parallelism or analogy. The analogy does not lie in the similitude between the person of Christ on the one hand, and the person of the inspired man on the other hand. To assert any such resemblance would be erroneous in itself, and pregnant with most dangerous doctrines. But the analogy lies in the likeness between the words that Christ uttered with His lips, and the words that inspired men wrote with their pens.

All Christ's words were, in the highest and strictest sense of the terms, the words of God, and no less the words of a man. There belonged to them the two features which belong to all that God says, namely, infallible truth and divine authority; and yet there belonged to them all the properties and attributes of what man says,—being in every essential respect human. The divine character that they possessed came from the fact of the Godhead being joined to the manhood in His person, or, to speak perhaps more correctly, from the power of the Holy Ghost dwelling without measure, and acting in a supernatural manner, within Him.

The human character that they possessed came from the fact of the human nature being found in union with the divine without confusion of the two, and without absorption of the manhood, or suspension of its powers by the Godhead. There was the free and plenary development of the divine agency and the human in His whole life; exhibiting, as He did, the fulness of the Godhead with the perfection of humanity in all His doings and speech, and neither the supernatural character nor the natural neutralized, suspended, or limited by the union. We confess that union in the words that He uttered when He spake as never man spake. We confess that union in His person in a manner different and more intimate still. The personal union was one that stands alone and unparalleled, and to which we have no analogy that answers. But the verbal union, seen in every word that He uttered, has its parallel in the word which His own Spirit put into the lips of His inspired servants, and enabled them infallibly to record. The spoken word of Christ, and the written word impressed by His Spirit upon the page of Scripture, are exactly alike, in that they are both to be received as equally the word of God and the word of man.

The analogy to this extent is complete, and affords a sufficient answer to those who allege that the union of the divine and human elements in inspiration is an impossibility. It affords something more than an answer to that objection. It suggests a lesson of warning and rebuke to those who are disposed to speculate upon the mode of the union of the divine and human in the written word, and to frame mutilated theories and explanations of inspiration.

The Church of Christ in primitive times was frequently agitated and divided with the discussion of questions, respecting the constitution of the Saviour's person, and the union of the two natures in Him, of a kind remarkably similar to those which have been raised in recent days in connection with inspiration. The mode of the union of the divine power and the human in the manifestation and history of the Son of God on earth,—the combination in the life that He lived among



men of the agency and will of the Godhead, with the agency and the will of the manhood,—the manner in which they operated upon or affected each other,—the channel through which the twofold aspect of the person of Christ found expression, in the deeds that He did or the words that He uttered;—these were questions that emerged out of the mystery of the union of the two natures in our Lord, and which, after keen controversy, were solved in no other way than by the frank and full acknowledgment of the mystery, and by the assertion of the doctrine that, in all that He did or said, He was God, and not less, in all that He did and said, He was man. The early Church, in dealing with the question of the constitution of Christ's person, did not abate one jot of the doctrine of the Godhead, in order that it might be better reconciled to the manhood; or impair the truth of the manhood, that it might more easily fit into that of the Godhead. It did not consent to limit the divine agency in anything that Christ did or said, in order that it might not overbear the human; nor profess to explain when the one was present and the other absent. Christians did not agree to hold that the Godhead was present and active only in such measure as was necessary to supplement what was wanting in the manhood; and, conversely, that the manhood was present and active in the degree and proportion that the Godhead was not. The doctrine of the early Church, and the doctrine of Scripture, from which they learned their wisdom, were, that in all that Christ was and wrought alike, and in every act and word of His, the divine nature and the human nature were equally present: so that of no one thing that He ever said or did it could be affirmed, that there was more or less of God in it than in anything else, or that there was more or less of man in it than in anything else. The questions raised in the early Church, and the answers given to these questions, have only to be transferred to the debate upon inspiration now, for its satisfactory adjustment.

This great example of the union of the divine and human agencies in Christ's words, without compromise or injury to

either, has its value as a precedent for a similar union in the written word, in no respect diminished or destroyed by the fact that it was supernatural. So is that inspiration by which Scripture was composed. The co-operation of the divine and human agencies to accomplish the result of the inspired word is, in the fullest sense of the term, supernatural; and, in this, parallel to the union of the divine and human in the spoken discourses of Christ. That in both cases it is miraculous, is itself a complete answer to the difficulty that it is inconceivable, and ought to put to silence the objection that it is not within the bounds of almighty power. The difficulty, whatever force there may be in it, of explaining the possibility of such a union, is not more or less in the case of inspiration than in the instance of our Lord's oral words.

But precisely the same analogy is to be traced in the case of men gifted with supernatural power of outward miracle. In this class of examples there was nothing like the personal union of the divine and human which was witnessed in the incarnate Son, and in which He stood forth alone among men. But although not in their persons, yet in their acts, when working miracle, the divine power was united to the human, in such a way that the two became one in the act. Every miracle that was wrought had not only its link of connection both with God and man, but embodied in it the power both of God and man. It could not have been performed as it was, without the presence of both the one and the other in the act performed. The one was as necessary to the actual result, in the shape in which it was witnessed, as the other. Without the divine agency controlling the course of nature, and supplying the supernatural cause, there could have been no such thing as the supernatural effect which was wrought out, and which we call a miracle. But, without the human agency supplying the visible instrumentality through which the divine power wrought, and moving in accordance with that power, the miracle might have been invisibly performed, but would not have, in any sense, been performed by man.

The miracle, done before the face of the eye-witnesses who

saw it, was in one sense done by God, but in another sense it was done by man; there was truly embodied in the performance the power of the divine agent and of the human alike: the hand of God was there, and without it the sign would never have been wrought; but the hand of the apostle was also there, and without this latter also it would not have been one of the signs of an apostle. The wonders and mighty deeds that accompanied the early disciples when they went preaching the gospel of their Master, were works of power, freely wrought by their agency, put forth in the same manner as their agency in common and ordinary works, and exercised by them freely and without restraint. But, at the same time, the divine agency, in its might, was conspiring with the human to the result. There was no suspension or abridgment of the power of man when it acted along with the power of God in effecting the result.

The same thing may be said in respect of the revelations of apostolic times, and the gift of tongues, when the early churches witnessed prophets having their lips moved to utter truths supernaturally given, and to speak in languages unknown to them before. In these miraculous revelations and tongues we have no reason to believe that the faculties of the speakers were suspended or moved mechanically in contradiction to their natural laws; but, on the contrary, were employed by God in co-operation with His supernatural power, but yet in accordance with their own proper nature.

In all these instances belonging to the department of the supernatural, we see examples precisely analogous to what is witnessed in the case of the written word. We see the union of the divine and human agencies conspiring together to effect one result, and co-operating in entire harmony to accomplish it, each according to its own nature and laws, and without interference or injury the one to the other. The laws of their character and action are different, but not contradictory, so that the one is suspended by, or partially neutralized by, the other. They meet and unite in one result, and both are equally free and perfect in the union.

The essential features of the case are the same in these instances as in the case of inspiration, and there is no more difficulty about the one than about the other. The difficulty is reproduced throughout the whole range of the supernatural actings of God.

2. In the department of the extraordinary or gracious working of God, we have also analogies that fully meet the objection charged against the doctrine of plenary inspiration.

The distinction usually drawn between the province of the supernatural agency of God, manifested in miracle and inspiration, and the province of the extraordinary agency of God manifested in grace, is one justified by the facts of the case. The laws and effects of the supernatural are different from those of the gracious working of God in the Christian life. But although the distinction is not to be overlooked, yet there is a complete resemblance between them, in the fact that the agency of God in both cases meets, and moves in harmony with the agency of man, in co-operating to one end.

The adaptation of the means of grace, used by the Spirit, to the actual effect to be wrought out in the recovery and restoration of the rational and spiritual nature of man, is itself a proof of this. The agency of the Spirit through these means, and not without them or against them, demonstrates the entire harmony between His operations in grace, and the native and voluntary powers of man. In the almighty act of divine power, by which the sinner is rescued from the ruin of his fallen condition, and his spiritual being is restored, there is no contradiction to the laws or principles of his nature, but, on the contrary, a studied and manifest conformity to them: the power of God, working through an instrumentality adapted to man, and both designed and calculated to co-operate with his rational and spiritual faculties. There is indeed a virtue in these means beyond their adaptation to our nature, and beyond their natural efficacy, in consequence of the presence of the Spirit, and the power that He imparts. But they are the meeting-place of the divine and the human

powers, where they concur and co-operate, and do not conflict with and contradict each other; the means being naturally adapted to the constitution of man, and supernaturally adapted to the purpose of God, in His work of grace upon it.

There is a work of divine and gracious power to be accomplished upon the rational and spiritual nature of man. Nothing but the power of God Himself, working towards the effect, and producing it by His Spirit, can compass this end. It is the doing of the Lord, and not of any other. And yet, at every step in the process from first to last, there is a pointed reference to the laws and character of man's intelligent and spiritual being, in its freedom and integrity. If the understanding is to be divinely taught, there are truths in themselves adapted to the understanding, but graciously employed by God to inform, convince, and satisfy it. If the will is to be savingly turned from evil, and subdued to the obedience of God, there are motives naturally fitted, but divinely used, to move it in the direction and to the end contemplated. If the conscience is to be made savingly to feel and own the authority of God that had been cast off, there is a law and lawgiver, with obligations naturally calculated to bind, and graciously made use of to secure submission. If the heart is to be filled with the love of God instead of the love of evil, then is the character of God in Christ presented as an object of love, in itself most eminently suited as an appeal to the heart and feelings of man, and divinely worked as an instrument to cast out every other sentiment, and to enthrone within the heart the lost affection.

In all this process, in which the originating and moving power is none other than the divine power of God's Spirit, in His special operations, there is nothing that runs counter to the laws and principles of the human constitution,—that suspends, or impairs, or abridges the proper faculties of the thinking and spiritual being,—or that interferes with them in their freedom and integrity. The renewal and recovery of man from the sin and shame and misery of the fall, is all the work of God; but it is a work carried on by God, not in de-



fiance of the will of man, but through means of his will, made to co-operate to the result,—not in opposition to the convictions of his understanding, but by these convictions being turned to the truth,—not in spite of conscience, but in virtue of the conscience brought to own the obligations of the divine authority,—not by overbearing and crushing the affections of the heart, but by the love of Christ calling them to a new object. There is in all this the power of God; but there is nothing in all this to subvert or destroy the nature of man.

So completely in harmony and accordance, throughout the whole work of grace, are the divine agency on the one hand, and the human agency on the other, co-operating and conspiring to one result, that the language of Scripture, in speaking of it, warrants us to affirm that the work in one sense is all of God, while in another sense it is all of man. From the very first, the divine power moves into activity the human power, and sustains it in willing co-operation throughout the entire course of the spiritual life; so that the extraordinary agency originating in the Spirit, and the human agency exerted by the Christian, are bound together in one, and equally embodied in every event of that mysterious history which begins with his conversion to God, and terminates only in his translation to God's presence.

Between these two extremes there is a divine life running its course; but bound up with it, and not to be distinguished from it, there is a human life. The acts of the one, due to the almighty power of the Spirit living in the Christian and working in him, are merged in the acts of the other life, proper to the Christian man, but taken up into union with the Spirit. They are the same acts; but there is a twofold character that belongs to them, as in one sense the result of God's agency, and in another sense the result of man's agency. The salvation of the sinner from first to last is the work of God, and yet from first to last he has worked out that same salvation with fear and trembling. His faith, by which he is justified in the beginning, and sanctified from day to day, is the result of God's power overcoming the un-

belief of nature, and working faith in him ; it is entirely the gift of God. And yet it is his own faith ; for with the heart he hath believed unto salvation. His repentance, it is the fruit of the operation of the divine power in his soul. The same repentance is the actual turning of his own nature willingly from sin unto God ; for, in sorrow for the past, under a lively sense of the evil of sin, and with desire after holiness for the future, the transgressor himself, and not another, hath repented. In every movement and work of the renewed life, from its beginning to its consummation, there is the same twofold character belonging to the one act : it is God's, and it is man's ; it is not more divine than it is human, and it is not more human than it is divine. So close is the union of the two characters, that the same act is expressed in Scripture sometimes by language appropriate to its divine, and sometimes by language appropriate to its human aspect.<sup>1</sup>

There is no doubt a mystery here, not to be explained, how the same act can be at once the work of God and the work of man ; and how, without confusion or injury to the character of the one or the other, the divine agency and the human can meet and embrace in the same result. Such a mystery is accepted by every man who believes that the renewed life of the Christian is not his own alone, but a life that has been breathed into him, and is animated by the Spirit of God in

<sup>1</sup> 'In efficacious grace we are not merely passive ; nor yet does God do some, and we do the rest. But God does all, and we do all. God produces all, and we act all. For that is what He produces, namely, our own acts. God is the only proper author and fountain ; we only are the proper actors. We are, in different respects, wholly passive and wholly active. In the Scripture, the same things are represented as from God and from us. God is said to convert, and men are said to convert and turn. God makes a new heart, and we are commanded to make us a new heart. God circumcises the heart, and we are commanded to circumcise our own hearts ; not merely because we must use the means in order to the effect, but the effect itself is an act and duty. These things are agreeable to that text, God worketh in you both to will and to do.'—EDWARDS : Remarks concerning Efficacious Grace, § 64.

His gracious operations. It is the same mystery that is witnessed in the supernatural department of God's actings. It is the same mystery that is reproduced in inspiration. Believers are familiar with the difficulty in the Christian life; they cannot object to it in connection with the written word.

3. In the province of nature there are analogies appropriate and sufficient to meet the objection brought against the doctrine of plenary inspiration.

The harmony of the divine and the human powers, when they meet and conspire to the same end, is plentifully illustrated in the ordinary providence of God. There is no suspension of the human agency, and no interference with the human powers, at the very time that they are upheld, governed, and ordered by the almighty power of God, present in all nature, and sustaining all things by His hand. In the commonest actions of men, in every movement of this life, we see exactly the same combination of the divine and the human powers that we witness both in the department of grace and in the province of the supernatural; with this only difference, that in the one case it is God acting according to the methods and laws of His ordinary providence, in the other case it is God acting according to principles still less known to us because manifested only in His extraordinary or miraculous operations. If it be a truth, taught to us alike by Scripture and by reason, that we live and move and have our being in Him,—that it is His power that sustains every movement of our persons, and animates and controls the living actions of men,—and that His almighty co-operation is necessary to our existence, and to all that we do,—then here once more we find the power of God in its fulness uniting with the power of man in its freedom, and combining to one effect, without injury to the proper character of either.

In one sense the actions of men are their own,—moved by their own will, due to their own power, regulated by their own motives, and directed to their own ends. In another sense the actions of men are God's,—dependent on His will, actuated by His power, governed by His appointment, and

ordered to His ends. The power of God in His providence, and the power of man in his ordinary works, are embodied in the same actions, and conspire together in bringing about the same result; and yet each moving according to the laws and character appropriate to each. They are so intimately blended, that they cannot be severed if the action is to be performed; and yet they are combined without confusion or interference.

The laws that regulate such co-operation we cannot pretend to explain. It is a mystery that resolves itself into one more general, and that includes well-nigh every other,—the mystery of the relations of the Infinite to the finite, and the co-existence and co-operation of both. The particular examples of the difficulty to which reference has been made, cannot be regarded or treated as if they were insulated and alone. It is impossible not to see that they are similar, if not actually the same, fundamentally. They belong to one class; and are to be resolved ultimately into the difficulty of conceiving or explaining the possibility of the co-existence of the Infinite with the finite, and their co-operation together. In every department of human thought the difficulty is to be met with, and is the same and equally insoluble in each. The co-existence and co-operation of the Infinite and the finite in nature, in grace, in the supernatural, are alike a mystery, and not more mysterious in one case than in another.

But the fact of the co-existence and co-operation is not affected by the mystery. It is a fact to be accepted as true, notwithstanding of the difficulty. The law whereby the Infinite exists and operates along with the finite, and the divine is found side by side with the human agency, combining with it to one effect, yet not interfering with its integrity and freedom, is not confined to any one department of the operations of God. It is not peculiar to the case of inspiration. It occurs in other instances of the supernatural. It occurs in the extraordinary or gracious operations of God. It occurs day by day in His common providence. And standing upon the ground of such analogies, we have reason to assert that the objection so generally urged against the doctrine of Scripture

inspiration, that we cannot conceive or explain the possibility of the human agency in its freedom and variety combining with the divine in its plenary perfection, is no objection at all, seeing that the very same difficulty is found in every other department of the operations of God.



## CHAPTER XII.

### CRITICAL OBJECTIONS.

THE objections to the plenary inspiration of Scripture, derived from a critical examination of the text, have been very many, and of different kinds. They usually resolve themselves into this, that an accurate examination of the sacred volume discloses in it features inconsistent with that kind and degree of perfection implied in a divine production, over which the agency of the Holy Ghost has presided to guard it from all mixture and contamination of human error, and to secure the infallible truth of all that it says. Sometimes it is the manifest variety or divergence of the statements of two or more of the sacred penmen when giving an account of the same occurrence or truth,—sometimes it is the assertion of defects in language or in argument,—sometimes it is the contradictions alleged to have been discovered between the writers themselves, or between their assertions, and truth or fact otherwise known to us,—sometimes it is the countenance presumed to be given by the inspired record to the errors in sentiment or conduct of the parties mentioned in its pages.

Amid the multitude and variety of objections to plenary inspiration, drawn from such sources, it is convenient to distinguish between that class of them which, even if true as facts, afford no argument against the doctrine; and that other class of them which, if true, would be conclusive as evidence against it, but which we believe to be not true as facts.

Perhaps the greater part, certainly a large number, of the objections commonly brought against inspiration, are founded upon a misunderstanding of what the Scripture doctrine

really is, or properly implies. The allegations made in the way of objection may be more or less true in themselves, but are directed against something else than the doctrine which the advocates of plenary inspiration really maintain. The amount of apparent force or plausibility which belongs to them, is derived from a misconception which, when removed or explained, removes out of the way the whole objection.

There are objections of a different class, which, if true in point of fact, must be regarded as decisive against the view of inspiration which it has been our object to maintain, and which can be met and obviated only by a proof that they are not true. This second class are generally of that kind that are not peculiar to inspiration, but common to it with any opinion that asserts the supernatural character or historical veracity of Scripture. They are objections, almost all of them, that strike indeed against the plenary inspiration of Scripture, but strike with no less force against the idea that it comes from God in any sense, and is to be accepted as an authentic and credible account of a supernatural communication made by Him.

I shall in the first instance advert to the objections founded upon those features of Scripture which are more or less true as facts, but which furnish no real argument against the doctrine of plenary inspiration. It is obviously impossible to enter into a detailed examination of all these objections separately. Nor is it necessary to do so. It will be enough for the purposes of the argument, to lay down certain general positions arising out of the view of inspiration already given, which, rightly understood, will serve to answer by anticipation the objections drawn from such quarters, in whatever forms they may be presented; and the fair and judicious application of which will remove very many of the difficulties which a critical examination of the text of Scripture suggests in the way of its plenary inspiration.

I. The first position to be laid down in answer to the objections that have been brought against the doctrine of

plenary inspiration, is, that the individuality of the Scripture authors, both as men and as writers, is perfectly consistent with the doctrine of plenary inspiration.

After the full discussion of the objection to inspiration from the alleged impossibility of the union of the divine and human agency in the written record, it is not necessary to lay down this first position for the purpose of proving the truth of it. It may be regarded as proved already. But it is important to announce it separately, that we may understand all that is really implied in it, in its bearing more especially upon objections commonly brought against the doctrine of plenary inspiration.

The two facts of the divine agency in its plenary perfection, and the human in its freedom and variety, are very often regarded as if they were opposite facts, or antagonistic to each other; and as if the presence or manifestation of the one in Scripture necessarily implied the exclusion of the other. This feeling is prevalent, and even predominant, in the case of many who would not take upon themselves the responsibility of asserting, and still less of proving, that the union of the two is impossible; and the feeling has had a tendency to gain for objections to inspiration acceptance with not a few, which they would not otherwise have obtained. The undeniable evidence of the individuality of the writer, so largely intermingled with the character and language, the thought and expression, the substance and the form, of the written word, has not only been accepted as proof, which it unquestionably is, of man's authorship of Scripture, in the same sense as we ascribe to man the authorship of any other book, but also has been regarded as evidence against God's authorship, if not entirely, at least in any sense in which we cannot explain how the divine is reconcilable with the human, and in any degree in which the divine is as perfect as the human, and not merely imperfect and supplementary to it.

Whatever belongs to and is characteristic of man's authorship as seen in Scripture, is undoubtedly to be accepted as evidence that it is man's, in the same way as the authorship

of any other book is. But viewing this fact as antagonistic to a divine authorship, there are many persons who regard the evidence on which it rests as so much proof against the doctrine of inspiration, at least in any sense that would make it, in its plenary perfection, to be co-extensive and co-ordinate with the human agency. There are many examples that might be given of this erroneous view. It is, indeed, from this quarter that not a few of the most common and popular of the objections against plenary inspiration proceed.

(1.) The individuality of the Scripture authors, seen and embodied in the shape of the expression of their own personal feelings, experience, or beliefs in the sacred volume, has frequently been appealed to as a fact inconsistent with the doctrine of a supernatural and plenary inspiration. The book of Psalms, for example, which contains such a vivid picture of the inner life of the spiritual man, and exhibits a record of the personal experience of the author, has, in consequence, been accounted no part of an inspired revelation properly so called. Even by earnest friends of the inspiration of Scripture, it has been denied the character of a revelation, while it is admitted to be inspired;<sup>1</sup> while by others it has been denied the character both of a revelation and an inspiration, being reduced in both respects to the level of a human composition. The very marked features of human individuality which it bears, in the form of that wonderful record of the soul's experience under sin and grace which it embodies, is the sole cause of its being degraded from its place as a true portion of God's inspired revelation.

The example of the Psalms is one out of many that could be quoted illustrative of this kind of objection to the doctrine of plenary inspiration. To every portion of Scripture which embodies or expresses the feelings or beliefs or experience of the inspired author, and contains a true record of human thought and sentiment and action, exactly the same objections must in principle apply. In point of fact, the objection, carried out consistently, has been applied to

<sup>1</sup> Lee: *The Inspiration of Holy Scripture*, p. 289.

many other departments of the sacred volume beyond the Psalms.

Now if, in the case of the Psalms, the author had expressly denied, instead of asserting, that ‘the Spirit of the Lord spake by him, and His word was in his tongue;’ if David had not belonged to that prophetic order of men to whom in former times God was pleased to give the double and invariably connected gift of His revelation and inspiration; if the document itself which contains the compositions of David, and the other authors associated with him in the authorship, had not been frequently recognised and sanctioned by our Lord Himself and the New Testament writers as belonging, equally with the Law and the Prophets, to the Old Testament canon,—it might have been asserted with some show of reason, that the record of human experience and feeling which the book of Psalms contains, was nothing more than the autobiography and confessions of one or more men like ourselves, tried and disciplined by a similar spiritual conflict. But, in the face of all the evidence that we thus have for the fact that the Psalms constitute both a revelation and an inspiration in the same sense of the words, and as much, as any other portion of the Old Testament, the circumstance that they exhibit, more prominently perhaps than other books, the marks and proof of human individuality, can be no argument against their inspiration with those who admit that the supernatural agency of God in inspiration is perfectly consistent with that individuality, in all its freedom and variety of development.

The representations of the inner life of a spiritual man which they contain; the exhibition of the author’s feelings, his thoughts, his experience, under the varied forms of joy and sorrow, of perplexity and trial, which he passed through; the assertion of what he believed and felt, and desired and deprecated, in each emergency of a chequered history, and called forth by the emergency,—are conclusive evidence that in his life, and in the record of it, he lived and wrote as he would have done had he not been inspired; but unless on



the supposition that the supernatural and natural agencies are incompatible when conjoined, are no evidence at all that what he said was not 'said by the Holy Ghost.'

The mere statement by the author of the Psalms, that he wrote what had occurred in his own experience,—what he had felt and known and believed of sin or of divine love,—or the evidence indirect, but as strong as any direct statement, that in what he recorded he has given us the picture of his own spiritual life, can be regarded as no argument at all against the inspiration of what he narrates, unless upon one or other of two suppositions. If, in the first place, the assertion that he wrote his own experience and belief and sentiments as a man, had been coupled with the additional assertion that he did *not* write by the Spirit of God, the statement must have been accepted as decisive against his inspiration. Or, in the second place, if the fact that he wrote as a man giving expression to all his human thoughts and feelings were itself incompatible with the fact that he also wrote as he was moved by the Holy Ghost,—the one fact being exclusive of the other,—then we must have been forced by a necessary inference to believe that he was not inspired in what he wrote. But neither of these suppositions is consistent with the facts of the case. So far is it from being true that there is any disclaimer of the supernatural aid of the Spirit in what he wrote, that the very opposite is the case,—he having himself previously claimed to write as a prophet endowed by God, and both our Lord and His apostles having repeatedly affirmed that the 'Holy Ghost spake by the mouth of His servant David.' And again, so far is it from being true that the free development of the human individuality of the inspired man is incompatible with inspiration generally, that, on the contrary, the objects of inspiration in Scripture could not be attained without the perfect preservation of it.

Over and above the grand object of guarding the record of God's mind and will from addition or mixture of human error, we cannot doubt that there was another object to be

attained by that peculiar arrangement adopted by divine wisdom, whereby the supernatural and the natural agencies were both and equally employed in the composition of the sacred volume. The record of God's revelation in Scripture might have been written there by the finger of God, without the instrumentality of men. It might have stood before our eyes like the handwriting on the wall inscribed by no human hand. Or the revelation of God, once communicated to the prophet, might have been left with him to be committed to writing without divine aid, and exclusively by human authorship. But neither of these methods has been adopted. If men alone had been the authors of the sacred record, it must have been marked by the infirmities and errors of men, and have been little akin to the perfection of God. If, on the other hand, God alone had been the author of the volume, it might have miraculously spoken in the language of men, but could have been no record of their thoughts and feelings, and nothing kindred to their understandings and hearts.

The supernatural union exhibited in the Bible between the authorship of God and the authorship of man, has brought into one, without injury to either, all the infallible truth and absolute authority which belong to the word of God, and those human features, appealing to our human sympathies, which belong to the word of man. Without the divine and supernatural agency in its unimpaired fulness, there might have mingled in the written Scripture the imperfections of men, and there certainly would have been wanting the truth and authority of God. Without the human agency in its unimpaired fulness and free diversity of development, the Bible would have contained the word of God, but would have failed to speak as it now speaks to the heart and understanding of His human creatures. That such a union is not impossible, has already been sufficiently proved. That it is analogous to all that is witnessed in the supernatural, the extraordinary, the natural departments of God's dealing, has also been established. Without such a union the very objects contemplated in the composition of the inspired volume

would not have been attained. Any objections drawn from the free and varied development of human individuality in Scripture, cannot be regarded as relevant objections to the doctrine of plenary inspiration.

(2.) The individuality of the sacred writers manifested in the variety of conception and expression, even in their statements of the same truth, or narrative of the same events, has often been appealed to as a prominent feature in Scripture, inconsistent with the doctrine of a supernatural inspiration.

The facts on which the objection is rested are undeniable, and of very frequent occurrence in the Bible. In the account of the same occurrences by two or more of the inspired penmen, there is often witnessed very much the same amount and kind of diversity as is seen in the narratives of the same events by profane historians competently informed and perfectly veracious. In the statements even of doctrines and superhuman truths, there is observable that variety and difference of conception in the case of the inspired interpreters of the Christian doctrines, which may be observed in the apprehension of any human truth by men thoroughly cognizant of it, and masters of its meaning and relations.

The existence of this diversity of conception and expression, in connection with the same truths or facts, is manifested in a great variety of forms in Scripture, and is more or less in different cases. It is one form out of many in which the individuality of the Scripture authors is seen to be preserved entire and free in its many varieties of development, notwithstanding of the supernatural agency that ruled their minds and pens in the composition of the sacred volume. But such a variety in thought and expression, in apprehension and speech, is perfectly consistent with truth, which may be represented under different relations and in different forms of language without ceasing to be truth. It is a variety not only consistent with human truth, but essential to it and inseparable from it; and the absence of which would constitute a decisive evidence that the statements of the sacred penmen were either not true or not human.

The general proposition which the Scripture account of the matter led us formerly to lay down as the proper statement of the place of the human element in the inspired word, is sufficient to cover all those diversities in conception and expression found in it in relation to the same truths or facts, and which have been brought as objections to plenary inspiration. Whatever belongs to, and is distinctive of, the human agency in its integrity and freedom, must be found in the written word, in virtue of its supernatural inspiration; and whatever is inconsistent with that agency is excluded. It is involved in the human instrumentality employed by God in the composition of the written word, and necessary as part of it, that a certain measure and kind of difference, both in conception and expression, should be found in the statement of the same divine truth by two or more of the inspired men. Without this, the agency would have ceased to be human.

Take twelve men of unimpeached and unimpeachable veracity, and all with the same ability and opportunity to see and know, and let them, in the freedom and integrity of their powers as independent observers and narrators, be called upon to declare what they have seen and known; and they must be more than men, or less than men, if their statements agree so as to amount to a complete identity, or if they do not, on the contrary, exhibit those divergences of thought and language which result from different views and different habits of conception and expression. A mechanical coincidence of thought and a literal sameness of language would as certainly prove that their statements were not true, or the true utterance of independent human observers, as the most complete contradictions between them. And what is found in the case of any outward and sensible fact spoken to by eye-witnesses honest in the statement of what they saw, is no less the case in regard to spiritual or doctrinal truth, interpreted and declared by independent teachers of it. There will be a difference in the conception and statement of it, corresponding to the different minds that apprehend and declare it. It were to destroy the individuality and subvert the freedom of the

human agents employed in writing the Scripture revelation, were such variety in the apprehension and statement of the same truths or facts by two or more of the inspired authors to be excluded.

But this variety in conception and language is not only necessary to human writers, but it is also perfectly consistent with truth itself. Among the multitude of aspects and relations in which the simplest sensible fact will present itself to human eyes, there are not more than a few in which it will be declared and expressed in any, even the fullest, description that an eye-witness can give of it. He must confine himself in his description to a few of the more prominent and marked features by which he has identified and observed it, and leave to other witnesses to describe the same fact in its other aspects, to which their attention has been more specially directed, or perhaps exclusively confined. Still more, in the countless relations in which any one truth stands to others, and the numberless ways in which it may be apprehended, different minds will apprehend it differently, and interpret it from different sides,—each interpretation varying from another in accordance with the different aspects in which the same truth is regarded; and yet, neither in regard to the visible fact nor the inward truth, is there anything like contradiction in the diverging statements thus given of them,—all the statements being strictly correct, according to the different relations of the fact or truth declared, and none of them being inconsistent with each other or the reality.

All this is perfectly familiar and readily admitted in the case of human witnesses or historians. The divergence of their statements, as to the same matters of which they speak, when within the limits that are due to the difference of the men or authors, is recognised as an evidence and confirmation of their veracity. The circumstantial diversity adds to the proof of substantial truth in the statements. And it is the same in the case of the inspired writers, when two or more of them differ in conception and language in their statements of the same fact or truth. The fact of their inspiration makes no



difference as to the original diversity in their minds or habits of thought or modes of expression, and as to the variations in the language of their authorship, to which these diversities must give rise. It does make a difference, indeed, in the single point of liability to fall into error, which, without inspiration, they would be exposed to. But, in other respects, the penmen of the Bible are the same with inspiration as without it. They manifest the same diversities as other independent historians. And such differences, due to the differences in the men and in the writers, are perfectly consistent with truth.

It is quite possible, indeed, that differences between independent historians may be something more than differences due to original diversity of mind or of powers of expression. They may amount to contradictions inconsistent with truth. In the case of two or more human historians, in which such differences are found, and when they certainly amount to, not only discrepancies which *we* cannot explain, but positive contradictions which are inexplicable and inconsistent with truth, there is no alternative but to attribute them to a failure of historical credibility on the one side or other, from deficient knowledge or deficient truth. In the case of the sacred volume, as it is now in our hands, it would be impossible to deny the possibility of the existence of such contradictions, introduced in the course of the transcription and transmission of manuscripts. But setting aside the possibility of errors from this source as hardly appreciable, the advocates of plenary inspiration are by their position bound to assert the entire freedom of Scripture from any differences among the sacred writers beyond, what is due to their individuality as men and authors, and what is consistent with perfect truth in the case of merely human historians. More than this is not necessary to the doctrine of plenary inspiration; and it is not the interest or duty of its defenders to assert more.

Those variations in the apprehension and statement of the same things which are found in human histories in their parallel narratives, and which are universally regarded not only as consistent with perfect veracity, but a confirmation

and additional evidence of it, are also consistent with perfect veracity when witnessed in the parallel passages of the evangelical or other Scripture narratives. In the case both of profane and of sacred historians, there may be examples of a fact stated by one writer in one way, and by a second writer in another, arising from the different relations or aspects in which alone each author has contemplated it, to the exclusion, but not to the contradiction, of other relations and aspects. Truths may sometimes be presented as half truths by one penman, which need to be supplemented by the second half of the same truths presented by the other. There may be defective statements by both authors, in the sense of statements that do not convey the whole of the truth, but which are not in the least untrue, but only incomplete. All these things may be found, and are found, in human historians and in inspired historians; and in both cases are the expressions of truth, and nothing but the truth; nay, even of the whole truth, in so far as the writer meant to express it. We have no right to ask more. It is no objection that more is not given.

More, indeed, could not have been given, unless the laws of the human mind had been subverted, and the inspired men had written under some influence that suspended or destroyed their powers as men. The divergence in statements, and the variety in conceptions, found among the writers of the Bible, serve the great purpose of exhibiting the same truths and facts in a diversity of light, and with a contrast of representation, not only essential to the men who wrote, but best adapted to the minds of their readers. A mechanical identity of thought and language between two parallel writers would have been impossible, in accordance with the character of the authors, or, if possible, would have been inconsistent with the advantage of those for whom they wrote.

If the question is urged, to what extent such differences between the Scripture writers may go without being inconsistent with inspiration by God, the answer is not far to seek. Whatever is consistent with perfect truth in any human writing, or on the lips of any human speaker, is also con-

sistent with perfect truth in those writings when inspired by God, and on those lips when they speak as they are moved by His Spirit. Within the limits of perfect human veracity in the case of two ordinary historians, there are found variations in the conception and expression of the same truth, which no one dreams of putting down to the score of falsehood, but which are accepted rather as a corroboration of their veracity. Precisely the same limits must be allowed, in the case of two inspired historians, to the diversity of thought and language employed in their representation of the same facts or truths, if they are to be accounted human as well as inspired writers, and if inspiration has not unmade them as men; and every reasonable man will accept the varieties of narrative and statement of Scripture, both as a positive advantage, in no other way to be enjoyed, and as an additional evidence of the truth of the writers.

The Christian apologist is willing and prepared to show his reasons for believing that, beyond what is recognised as perfect truth in the case of any uninspired writing, there are no discrepancies among the sacred penmen,—that is to say, differences which, when found in two profane authors, would be counted contradictions or positive falsehoods. Short of these, there are numberless divergences of thought and language, due to the differences in the personal character and individuality of the human agents employed by God to write His word, but not incompatible with perfect truth in the sight either of God or man.

That infallible truth which is found in Scripture, in virtue of its inspiration, can be represented in different relations, under various aspects, and in divers forms of language, and still remain infallible truth. It can ally itself to all the varieties of human thought and human speech, and not cease to be divine. It can enter into connection with the minds of men different, and even opposite, in original structure and acquired habits of thought, and be embodied in the diversity of their conceptions and language, and still be the truth of God. It is embodied in the thoughts and language of Moses

and David—of Paul and John ; and yet it is no less divine than it is human. The varieties of man's thoughts and words are not more than the varieties of God's truth ; and are not inconsistent with it. The one great mystery of the union of the divine and human, the supernatural and the natural, in the Bible, is sufficient to cover all the diversities among its human writers : it is the infallible word of God at the very time that it is the varied speech of man ; and all its differences are consistent with the fact that it is both human truth and divine. The individuality of the sacred writers, expressing itself in differences of thought and language, in the parallel accounts of the same thing, is not inconsistent with the doctrine of plenary inspiration.

The instance of the superscription on the cross may be taken as an example of the extent to which objections, drawn from the individuality of the Scripture writers, have been brought against inspiration, and of the manner in which they are applied to the minute and circumstantial variations in the language of their histories.

The accusation, written in Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, and therefore not word for word identical in the different languages, but differing probably according to the linguistic differences of each, is given by all the four evangelists in terms not verbally the same, but showing a variation that can on examination be readily perceived. This difference has been referred to by parties not unfriendly to the inspiration of Scripture in a certain mutilated form, as undoubted evidence of the absurdity of the view of those who advocate the doctrine in a higher sense.<sup>1</sup> The only thing of which it affords undoubted evidence, is the misunderstanding of the doctrine by those who bring such an objection against it.

The variations in the narratives of the four historians will be best understood by a comparison of the parallel passages, arranged in the order which most clearly brings out the difference between them in its proper character and origin. They are as follows :—

<sup>1</sup> Alford : *New Test.* vol. i. p. 292, 5th edition.

‘And the superscription of His accusation was written over The King of the Jews.’

Ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

Mark xv. 26.

‘And a superscription was written over Him in letters of Greek, and Latin, and Hebrew, This is the King of the Jews.’

Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

Luke xxiii. 38.

‘And set up over His head His accusation written, This is Jesus the King of the Jews.’

Οὗτός ἐστιν Ἰησοῦς ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

Matt. xxvii. 37.

‘And the writing was, Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.’

Ἰησοῦς ὁ Ναζωραῖος ὁ βασιλεὺς τῶν Ἰουδαίων.

John xix. 19.

Now, the question whether the noticeable variations in the language in which the superscription is given in the different evangelists is compatible or not compatible with the plenary inspiration of the historians, is one to be answered by means of another question,—namely, whether these variations are consistent or not consistent with perfect truth, on the supposition that they were not inspired, but no more than human historians. In affirming that the supernatural inspiration of God allied itself to the human authorship of the evangelists in the histories that they wrote, in order to preserve them from error, the advocates of plenary inspiration do not assert that any change was produced upon their character as men or authors, imposing upon their minds and pens the necessity of some constrained and mechanical identity in what two or more of them might write in their record of the same events. The immunity from error which was bestowed by the gift of inspiration was perfectly consistent with that freedom and variety both of thought and expression in connection with the facts or truths narrated, which ordinary men naturally



or necessarily exhibit when relating the same things in different forms of language,—a freedom and variety consistent with perfect veracity in the case both of inspired and of ordinary writers.

The varieties in the report of the title upon the cross exhibited by the four evangelists are admitted, even by those who make them an objection to plenary inspiration, to be entirely consistent with perfect truth on the part of the historians, so long as they are regarded as no more than human witnesses. They are counted to be inconsistent with truth, only when the historians are declared to be inspired. Such an objection proceeds upon a misunderstanding of what is meant by plenary inspiration, and of what it implies. What is perfect truth in a human writing, is also perfect truth in one supernaturally inspired. What is not inconsistent with human veracity, is not falsehood according to the standard of Scripture infallibility. The test, and the only proper test, to be applied in the case of such varieties of conception and expression in the Scripture text, is the same that would be applied in the case of human compositions. What is truth in the sight of God, is not something different from what is truth in the sight of man.

Leaving out of sight for the moment the fact of their inspiration, and looking at the different statements of the four Gospels, there is nothing in these statements inconsistent with human veracity, as that is judged of and tested in the case of ordinary writings. The divergence and variety in the narratives are plainly due not to the contradictions, but to the comparative completeness and incompleteness of the statements.

In Mark, we have the title on the cross in its briefest and least complete form, and yet described in such terms as do not exclude the fuller statement of the other historians, or assert that anything beyond what he gives is false. The superscription is given only in part: 'The King of the Jews.' In Luke, we have the same title in the same words, with the inconsiderable addition of the words of affirmation inserted in Luke which were only implied in Mark:

'*This is the King of the Jews.*' The evangelist Matthew repeats the title and affirmation in the identical terms of Luke, with the further addition of the common name by which our Lord was known: '*This is Jesus, the King of the Jews.*' And, lastly, we have the complete title, which had been given only in part, but correctly to the extent that they went, by the others, in the narrative of John; while he leaves out the words of affirmation as unimportant: '*Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews.*'

Now, in all these varieties there is no difference except what is due to the more or the less full statement of the same fact, and nothing in any of the statements inconsistent with each other, or with the reality of the fact. It is exactly the circumstantial diversity of statement that is invariably found in the independent testimonies of different witnesses speaking to the same fact, and which is acknowledged by all to be not only within the limits of perfect truth, but an essential characteristic of the truthfulness of the testimony.

And what is thus a necessary accompaniment of human veracity, is not inconsistent with that same veracity when guarded infallibly by the inspiration of God from admixture of human error. It is not a different kind or degree of truth that we witness in ordinary authorship and in inspired writings, as if what was true in the one could be false in the other, or what was false in the one could be true in the other. Truth is and must be the same thing in both. Variations in the manner in which it is exhibited, and the language in which it is expressed, are allowable, in both cases, to precisely the same extent, without being chargeable with inaccuracy or error. The line that separates circumstantial diversity from positive falsehood, and incompleteness of statement from real contradiction, must be drawn at the same point, and determined by the same principles in both cases.

Objections, then, that are drawn from the frequent and marked differences in the manner in which the various Scripture writers conceive of the same truth, and express it in their writings, are relevant and proper objections to inspiration,

in the case of the Bible, only if, in the case of any other book, they would be relevant and proper objections to the truthfulness of its statements. I do not speak of that general historical veracity which we attribute to an author who is sufficiently informed and disposed to speak the truth; for, through human ignorance and unintentional error, a writer personally veracious may yet be chargeable with what is untrue in his writings. In speaking, then, of the trustworthiness of any uninspired book, there is a distinction to be drawn between the truth of the writer personally, and the truth of the statements contained in his writings. But keeping this distinction in view, it is important, in dealing with the question of inspiration, to lay down the general proposition, that truth or falsehood in inspired writings is not a different thing from truth or falsehood in uninspired writings; and that no objections against the former, arising out of the diversity of thought and language found in the statement of the same doctrines or facts, can be real objections, if they would not be equally available against the latter.

(3.) But the individuality of the inspired men, exhibited in so many ways in Scripture, is the source of another form of objection. The appeal so often made to their own testimony as eye-witnesses, or to their own knowledge as men personally cognizant of the facts or truths which they record, is frequently referred to as decisive evidence against the doctrine of plenary inspiration.

The evangelist Luke, for example, in the preface to his Gospel history, refers in express terms to those who were eye-witnesses of the things most surely believed respecting the life and history of our Lord; and, in order that the certainty of these might be known, seems to assert that the perfect understanding of them which he personally had acquired was derived from a similar source; or, in other words, from the testimony of men who had seen or known the facts. In like manner, when contrasting the certainty of Christian truth with cunningly-devised fables, the Apostle Peter appeals, in corroboration of it, to his own testimony as a man who had

seen what he records, and had been an eye-witness of the majesty of Christ of which he speaks.

The former of these passages has been appealed to by men who do not deny, but, on the contrary, assert, a certain kind and degree of inspiration, as evidence that the evangelist wrote, as other historians write, without supernatural assistance; and that he derived his materials exclusively from the information of other men, and from his own diligent search into the truth of the facts reported to him.<sup>1</sup> It is only necessary to carry out this principle to its legitimate results, and to generalize, as applicable to all similar cases, the instance of Luke, and we are naturally or necessarily led to adopt the conclusion, that in every case where the sacred penmen were acquainted from personal knowledge, or the report of others, or through any other trustworthy channel, with the facts or truths which they record, they availed themselves of such aids to write, and were in no respect indebted to supernatural revelation or inspiration to assist them in doing so. Hence the theories of inspiration to which we have had occasion to refer before, which assert that the divine and supernatural agency was present in some portions of Scripture, but not in others, and was active only to the extent and in the degree that the human agency was by itself insufficient.

Now if the evangelist Luke, in appealing to his own knowledge derived from the report of others, had disclaimed any other source of information, and denied that, in addition to the human witness of the facts, there was also one supernatural and divine, the argument against inspiration from such an appeal would have been a relevant and sufficient one in so far as regards his history. Or if the Apostle Peter, in referring to his own testimony as a spectator of the transfiguration, in corroboration of the certainty of the fact, had disclaimed the supernatural aid which had been promised and given to him as an apostle for the purposes of his office, and had denied, instead of affirming, that he

<sup>1</sup> Alford, vol. i. pp. 18, 19, 5th edition.

preached the gospel to his converts 'with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven,' then here, too, we should have had proper evidence of the absence of the divine agency. But when, in neither case, is there any positive disclaimer or implied denial, the only argument against inspiration from these and similar appeals to their own veracity or knowledge as men competent to bear a proper witness to the facts and truths they record, must be derived from the presumption that these appeals are generally inconsistent with the presence of supernatural inspiration. Such a presumption is plainly founded on the idea already discussed and set aside, that the human agency in its proper character and integrity, is inconsistent with the divine agency in its plenary perfection, in the case of inspiration.

If the gift of supernatural power to record with infallible truth the revelation communicated were incompatible with the human agency of the inspired man, or deprived him of anything that belonged to him as a man or as a writer, and made it impossible or incompetent for him to do anything that as a man or a writer he would have done without inspiration, then, indeed, such appeals by the Scripture writers to their own veracity and knowledge as men, would have been inconsistent with the fact of their plenary inspiration by God. These appeals plainly prove that, whatever they would as authors have done without inspiration, they actually did in composing the inspired volume. They acted (with the one exception of being kept from error) precisely as they would have acted had they been set down to write the account of facts and truths coming to them from some other quarter than from God, and guaranteed by no warrant except their own knowledge and truth as historians. They might have been eye-witnesses of what they had to relate, and in that case they could use and appeal to their knowledge as eye-witnesses. They might be acquainted with the occurrences from the reports of others, and in that case could employ and refer to these reports. They might find the facts that they had to embody in their narratives, some of them in other



and previous documents; and if so, they were not debarred from making what use was proper of these sources of knowledge. All this was competent to them, and characteristic of them as men who wrote according to the ordinary methods, and under the influence of the usual laws which guide or influence human authors. And all this was perfectly consistent with the presence and power of the Spirit of God simultaneously in His supernatural inspiration of them as His instruments to record His word. Their human powers and peculiarities as men and as authors were not superseded or suspended by the agency of God operating upon them first to cause them to receive a revelation, and afterwards to move them to record what was revealed.

If this union of the supernatural and the natural, each according to its own character and completeness, is not an impossibility,—if, on the contrary, the evidence we have for the double authorship of Scripture, as being at once the word of God and the word of man, in the proper sense of the terms, be satisfactory, then there can be no difficulty at all in accepting the fact that Luke and Peter and the other writers of Scripture could act and write, and refer to themselves, as honest and competently informed writers at the very moment that they were moved by the Holy Ghost. This is nothing more than a particular instance of the more general fact, the possibility and the reality of which have already been established, that the divine agency and the human can meet and combine towards the production of the written word, and each of them in its proper character and perfection.

The appeal made in any particular instance to their knowledge and veracity as men, is proof indeed that in composing the sacred volume they acted as men; but is no proof that they did not also act as men guided by supernatural inspiration. The manifestation in any portion of Scripture of any one of their characteristics as human authors, is no objection at all to their authorship being inspired, unless it is held that the general union of the supernatural and the natural to effect the result is itself impossible. Whatever was their individu-

ality as men or as authors, it was in all its freeness and diversity consistent with the fact of plenary inspiration.

(4.) But objections of a somewhat different form have been brought against the plenary inspiration of Scripture, and are referable to the same source of a practical denial of the consistency of the individuality of the sacred penmen with the supernatural agency operating upon them. The different arrangement of the subject-matter contained in the parallel histories of the same events found in Scripture, has been referred to as a decisive argument against inspiration in the highest and most complete sense of the word.<sup>1</sup>

In the case of the Gospel narratives more especially, the difficulty of constructing a Harmony of the events of our Saviour's life out of the four biographies which we possess, has been acknowledged from the earliest times. In endeavouring to combine into one continuous history which shall follow the order of time, the narratives of the different evangelists, it has been found impossible to do so without altering the arrangement of one or more of them, and having recourse to arbitrary and hypothetical conjectures to reconcile their variations with the chronological sequence of the events. These variations in the order of arrangement, according to any chronological succession, have been spoken of as inaccuracies inconsistent with the doctrine of a plenary inspiration of the Scripture narratives, and only to be explained upon the supposition of an inspiration which may secure the truth of the more important facts of our Saviour's life, but admits of human inaccuracy in the details.

Here once more we have an example of the unwillingness on the part of many to admit the possibility of the existence in the Scripture page of the supernatural agency of God along with the entire preservation of the individuality of the sacred penmen. If the order of arrangement in the histories of the different evangelists were an order which directly or indirectly was affirmed by them to be in all cases chronological, and was found at the same time to be different in the

<sup>1</sup> Alford, vol. i. pp. 18, 19, 5th edition.

four Gospels, it would be impossible to reconcile the fact with historical veracity. But if there is no such affirmation as to the arrangement which the sacred historians have actually followed, any discrepancy between them as to the order and sequence of their materials can be interpreted as an argument against plenary inspiration only on the supposition that such a supernatural agency, exerted in the case of all, was inconsistent generally with that diversity of arrangement in any, which four human historians writing the same biography would naturally or necessarily have exhibited.

Harmonists have often carried their attempts to square the four narratives of our Saviour's life according to some hypothetical order of chronological succession, and to educe out of them all combined, one continuous history, to an extent unwarranted by anything in the evangelical narratives themselves. These narratives do not throughout, or in many cases, profess to follow the succession of time. It may perhaps be impossible to arrange them all according to such a principle. And failing in our attempts to do so, the failure is not to be accounted a contradiction or falsehood on the part of the sacred historians, who do not either expressly or by implication give us warrant to believe that the order of time in the succession of events was the only arrangement followed by them in their narratives.

The difficulty, or the impossibility in some instances, of harmonizing, according to the order of time, the events of the evangelical history, is precisely what might have been expected in the case of four independent human historians, writing according to the ordinary laws that guide authors in such matters. The grand and outstanding events of the history fall easily and naturally into their places, in their proper order of time. The minor details, in the shape both of events and discourses, in the narrative of our Lord's life, are, to a large extent, arranged in the history according to some other and higher principle than that of chronological succession. The connection of events, in respect of their spiritual import and bearing on the truths that our Saviour

taught,—their doctrinal relations to each other, and to Him from whom they derived their authority and significance,—are links more important than those of time, to bind together the occurrences narrated.

In the case of profane history, in proportion as more intimate connections than those of a chronological kind are permitted to rule the order and succession of any narrative, will it exhibit occasional departures from the sequence of time, in order to conform to a higher law. This is precisely what has occurred in the case of the evangelical histories. It has created a difficulty, or perhaps an impossibility, of harmonizing, according to the order of time, all that is written in the Gospels. But the authors of the Gospels never asserted that such an order was to be observed by them in their narratives, to the exclusion of every other. The freedom in this respect which every one readily concedes to profane historians, and deems consistent with perfect historical accuracy, must be conceded to the historians of our Lord's life. The fact that they were inspired does not limit their liberty in the least, to choose what principle, whether of time or of some other and perhaps more important order, is to regulate the arrangement and grouping of historical events. Their peculiarities as men and as human writers were made use of by the Spirit of God to give expression through them to His own infallible word; and the instrumentality did not impair, but the better gave utterance to, the truths communicated. Unless we are prepared to assert that the divine agency cannot so ally itself to the human individuality of the inspired men, we must be constrained to admit that such a development of the diversity of four independent human historians in the arrangement and order of their historical materials is perfectly consistent with the supernatural agency under which they alike wrote. The existence of such individuality and diversity in arrangement is no objection to the doctrine of plenary inspiration.

II. But another position to be laid down with a view of

obviating the objections brought against the plenary inspiration of Scripture is this, that the personal fallibility of inspired men generally is perfectly consistent with the doctrine of the infallibility of their writings in the Bible. We have seen that the supernatural agency of God in inspiration does not affect the individuality of the inspired man when under its operation. But it is also true that it does not affect the fallibility of the inspired man in word and deed at other times than the moment of inspiration, and in connection with other matters than his share in the authorship of Scripture.

The truth of this statement is too obvious to require either proof or illustration. Yet, in practical disregard of it, many of the common objections to Scripture inspiration are drawn from the errors in speech or conduct of inspired men. Forgetting the distinction to be made between the official and the personal character of the men to whom the supernatural gift was given, and the limited purpose for which it was designed, there are opponents of inspiration who draw their objections to the doctrine from the imperfections to be found in the life and words generally of those on whom the endowment was conferred. Either the sins and defects in word and deed of inspired men on other occasions are charged upon their writings when under inspiration, or the impossibility of their being guided by infallible inspiration at all, is inferred from such imperfections manifested in their character and conduct otherwise.

Now, in dealing with such objections, it is important to note the object of inspiration, and the end to be accomplished by it. It was a supernatural endowment, bestowed for the special purpose of making certain selected men, in the first place, the recipients of an extraordinary communication from God ; and, in the second place, the unerring instruments of conveying it, unmingled with human imperfection, to the written page of Scripture. This was the one end for which prophets received the heavenly gift ; and neither the end to be accomplished, nor the means necessary to accomplish it,



implied or involved an exemption on the part of the men inspired, from error in word or deed universally.

In conduct generally, they might be men liable to temptation and infirmity at other times, and in connection with other matters; as unquestionably all the inspired men of whom we read in Scripture were. Or they might be men wicked and strangers to God, selected perhaps for the very purpose of showing that His supernatural gifts were not like His spiritual, and not to be valued like them; as Balaam and Caiaphas were selected. In their words at other seasons, and in reference to other matters, they might be fenced around with no infallibility, but be prone, like others, to offend with their tongue, and speak unadvisedly or untruly with their lips; as was exemplified probably in the case of Peter, when Paul at Antioch withstood him to the face because of his compromising the liberty of Gentile converts, and dissembling in the controversy as to the necessity of circumcision. The supernatural endowment given to inspired men, for the specific purpose of guarding them from error in committing to writing the revelation communicated, is a very different thing from inspiration given in all that they spoke or wrote; and still more so from a supernatural power guarding them from error in their personal conduct.

Even in the case of apostles, occupying a position different from and superior to that of prophets, and set apart to a permanent office during their lifetime, and not simply to the temporary work assigned to the other penmen of Scripture, of committing to writing the special revelation given to them, it may be questioned whether inspiration was a gift that belonged to them at all times, and in all that they said and did, or only an endowment enjoyed so far, and no further than, as they spoke and acted officially in their character as apostles. There seems to be reason from Scripture to believe that to the extent it was not necessary for the purpose of the apostolic office, and to secure the apostles from errors in doctrine in their authoritative teaching, or errors in practice in their official actings in the government and administration

of the Church, inspiration was not conferred; leaving them at other times and on other occasions to the ordinary means and aids which other Christians enjoy to protect them against failure in word or deed. The conduct of Peter at Antioch, the contention of Paul and Barnabas, the much disputing at the council of Jerusalem, and other instances, seem to point to this conclusion.

The closely parallel case of miraculous gifts bestowed on the apostles for the purposes of their mission as apostles, very decidedly confirms this view. The endowments of miraculous power were given to the office, and not to the man. The exercise of the power was restricted to the occasions and necessities of the apostleship, and not extended to the requirements or wishes of the men who possessed it. Paul had no power to work a miracle to get himself bread, or to exempt him from the necessity of toiling with his own hands to win it. His gifts of miraculous healing, bestowed plentifully on others when the purposes of his mission required it, were not extended to his brother and companion in labour when sick nigh unto death, to restore Epaphroditus to health, and to save himself from sorrow upon sorrow. In no other way can we explain the occasions in the apostolic history which witnessed the performance of miracles, or saw them withheld, than by a reference to the demands and advantages of the office, and not of the person who held it.

It was the same with inspiration. It was a gift which, even in the instance of apostles, was given for the purposes of inspiration, and not for the personal endowment of the individual, or for his use at any time and for any object. Within the limits of his official teaching, oral or written, and of his official acting in planting and perfecting the infant Church, an apostle was infallibly guided by the supernatural influences of the Spirit. Beyond these limits he was liable to error in word and conduct like other men, and was shut up like ordinary Christians to feel the necessity of having recourse to those ordinary means and aids of grace open to all for keeping himself from falling. Both in the instance of

apostles specially, and in the instance of inspired men more generally, the inspiration conferred did not involve or imply exemption from error in word or conduct beyond what was necessary for the special and limited object contemplated by their appointment as the penmen of the divine revelation, and officially charged with its authorship.

David at one time may have been inspired to indite his spiritual songs for the edification and solace of the Church in all ages,—the record of sin and backsliding, and anguish and repentance, and recovery and pardon and joy in God, which he embodied in them, being at once the expression of his own feelings and experience, and a proper revelation infallibly inspired from on high; and at another time he may have been left without inspiration to speak unadvisedly with his lips, and to sin grievously in his practical conduct. Peter may have been at one time inspired as an apostle of Jesus Christ, to write with a wisdom and truth not his own to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia,—and the record remains to the present day a record of infallible words; and at another time, Peter, as a man, may have been left without supernatural restraint to dissemble both in his speech and in his conduct.

Inspiration, whether plenary or not, is not responsible for such imperfections, and cannot fairly be made to bear the burden of these errors. It is an injustice warranted by no pretence of reason, either to reduce to the level of their fallible words and erring conduct at other times, the infallible record that the same men penned under divine inspiration; or to deny the possibility of their being led and guarded by supernatural power at one time, and in reference to one matter, if they were not so led and guarded at all times, and in reference to all matters. The very sins that David without inspiration committed, he has under its infallible guidance recorded; and the record is not less inspired because it contains from his own hand the confession. The deceit of Peter when left to himself, without the restraint of divine or supernatural inspiration to withhold him, has not hindered him,

when under the power of inspiration, from referring with special and pointed commendation to those letters of his beloved brother Paul, in which his sin and the rebuke of it by Paul are recorded ; nor is the reference less inspired that it contains indirectly an acknowledgment of his sin. Error at other times, and in connection with other matters, is perfectly consistent with infallible inspiration in the one matter of putting on record the revelation of God given to inspired men to embody in the written word for all time. Supernatural inspiration does not profess to remove human fallibility generally or universally, whether in speech or action. A right understanding of the nature and limits of the doctrine, would furnish an answer by anticipation to many of the popular objections to plenary inspiration, founded on the examples that can be gathered from Scripture of the imperfections in word and life of inspired men. It is enough, without going into the detail of illustrative cases, to lay down, in opposition to all such objections, the general proposition, that the personal fallibility of inspired men generally, is quite consistent with the doctrine of the infallibility of their writings in the sacred volume.

III. But not only is imperfection, of whatever kind, at other seasons, in the case of the Scripture writers, quite consistent with a plenary inspiration when they penned their official writings ; but there is a certain kind of imperfection even in these writings themselves which is compatible with supernatural inspiration. We must, in meeting the objections commonly urged against Scripture infallibility, lay it down as a third position, that the defects or imperfections proper to the sacred authors as authors are quite consistent with the doctrine of plenary inspiration. The presence of the supernatural agency of God with the sacred penmen does not involve or require an exemption on their part from those natural deficiencies as writers which, without inspiration, they would have manifested.

This admission, however, of imperfection, as existing in the

writings of Scripture, is one that is to be carefully defined, and limited to imperfection not interfering with the infallible truth and divine authority of the record. In speaking of the deficiencies of the penmen of Scripture as writers, we do not refer to any want of knowledge or faithfulness or ability rightly to record the revelation given to them,—deficiencies to which as men they might have been liable, but which as inspired men, and in virtue of their inspiration, they were supernaturally exempted from. The very object for which the extraordinary presence of the Spirit was ministered to them, was to secure in their case the knowledge and faithfulness and ability to record truly the divine word, which without inspiration they could not have possessed. But apart altogether from ignorance or unfaithfulness or incompetence, there were other deficiencies not affecting the completeness and infallibility of the record of Scripture to which its human authors were liable.

There might be deficiencies in education, in literary capacity, in intellectual endowment and refinement, in taste and cultivation, attaching to the writers themselves, and through them transmitted to their writings. There might be the impress upon the record which they penned of the inexperience of men who, accustomed to other habits of life and modes of speech, sat down to the task of historians and interpreters of divine truth as to an unfamiliar work; and whose literary deficiencies are to be traced in peculiarities of grammar and idiom and style, detracting from the sacred volume as a production of art, but not affecting it in the least as an infallible exhibition or expression of the divine mind. There might be sins against a pure dialect or a right syntax or an Attic taste, which, judging by the standard of an immaculate criticism, would materially modify our estimate of the Scripture writers as authors, but not in the least our estimate of them as the infallible penmen of the Spirit of God. Such imperfections and defects of a literary kind in the inspired volume there unquestionably are. It is of no use or advantage to assert for it a kind of perfection which it has not



asserted for itself. But how do such imperfections stand in reference to the doctrine of plenary inspiration?

A slight consideration is sufficient to show that the existence of such defects is no objection whatsoever to the doctrine of the supernatural presence of God in the composition of His written word. Whatever is necessary to that word as an infallible record of a divine revelation, inspiration supplied. Errors in point of truth, or the accurate expression of truth,—errors in respect of facts, or the right statement of facts,—there are none. Errors in point of style or grammar or idiom, there may be many. The literary imperfection, the sinless deficiencies, that belonged to the authors of Scripture as authors, but which did not affect their writings as a complete and infallible expression of the mind of God, are not excluded by inspiration. The doctrine of a plenary inspiration does not demand that they should be excluded. The imperfections in language, and the incompleteness even in conception, of the human authors of Scripture, may be overruled and employed by God to express His mind with infallible accuracy, as certainly and as easily as if their words and ideas had been supernaturally improved and elevated into conformity with some ideal standard of perfection in style and thought.

God has wrought no miracle to amend the idiom or the grammar of the fishermen taken from their nets, or the publican from the receipt of custom, to commit to writing His word. Whatever was necessary to make both the fisherman and the publican the true and infallible recorders of the divine revelation, that God has done for them. But for this purpose it was not necessary, by some act of miraculous power, to change their natures, and to make them write in the language of a Greek classic, or to supernaturally watch over their parts of speech, lest they should offend the critic by their ignorance of syntax or style. Hence, in reading their compositions, we see that the impress of their character and deficiencies as authors is preserved entire, and that their Galilean tongue still bewrayeth them.

There are two opposite extremes which have been exemplified in connection with the literary character of the Bible, and neither of them to be defended. It has been the custom with some writers, more frequently in former than in recent times, to exaggerate the literary excellences and characteristics of the Scripture volume, and to represent it as a sort of model of perfection in almost every department of composition. Those who have done so seem to have forgotten that it makes no such pretensions on its own behalf, and that it had other objects in view than to constitute a standard of literary taste.

No idea could be in itself more unworthy of God, or show more strongly on our part an inadequate conception of His purposes in revelation, than to imagine that, in selecting the human instruments who were to record it, the selection was in any degree influenced by the consideration of their literary capacity and taste; or that, in endowing them with their mysterious gifts of inspiration, it was an object to remove more or less of their imperfections as authors. When the perfection of the divine element was, in gracious accommodation to man, allied to his imperfect speech with the view of imparting an inspired revelation that should speak to him in his own tongue, it was an act of wonderful condescension; the wonder of which could not be increased by choosing the unlearned and the stammering lips instead of the wise and eloquent, according to human judgment, in order to declare it. If an infallible utterance of eternal wisdom can be embodied in human words at all, it can be spoken in the words of Galilee as well as in those of Greece.

But the opposite extreme is quite as indefensible. By many in the present day the literary imperfections of the Bible are exaggerated and paraded as features in it incompatible with the idea of a divine authorship, and as objections of a conclusive kind to the doctrine of plenary inspiration. Those who adopt such a mode of getting rid of the infallibility of Scripture, forget that the perfection that we claim for the sacred volume, and which it claims for itself, is a very different kind of perfection from any that is ruled by literary

canons. It is the perfection of infallible truth ; it is the complete conformity of the idea, as recorded in the page of Scripture, with the original as it dwelt in the mind of God ; so that the Saviour, in His last prayer for His disciples, could assert the very identity of the words which He had received from the Father, with the words which they had received and believed from Him : ‘I have given unto them the words which Thou gavest Me, and they have received them.’ The union of that divine truth with human and inspired speech, in any form of words, is a union which we never shall be able adequately to explain ; but it is a union which there is no more difficulty in understanding when exemplified in the language of men of slow and imperfect speech, than when found in the words of the wisest and most eloquent.

Does the doctrine, then, of plenary inspiration, directly or by implication, charge upon the Spirit of God the imperfections and deficiencies confessedly witnessed in the writings of Scripture, and make Him responsible for errors and inaccuracies in language or idiom ? The objection to a plenary inspiration of Scripture has very often been put into such a form ; but the objection in such a shape is nothing but another instance of the old difficulty reappearing in a new form, of how we are to reconcile the union of the divine and human agencies in any way that retains the proper character and distinctive diversities of each,—a difficulty that is the same upon any theory of inspiration that does not discard and deny the union in whatever manner. We make the Spirit of God, according to the doctrine of plenary inspiration, to be responsible for the deficiencies and imperfections of a linguistic or literary kind exhibited by the sacred penmen, not more and not less than we make Him responsible for those characters of human and personal individuality, whether we call them imperfections or not, which are stamped so markedly on the Scripture page.

It was not necessary for God, in accomplishing the objects of an inspired revelation to man, to exclude from it the evidences and fruits of the individuality of its authors. Nay, it was necessary, in order to secure these objects the better, to

employ men as writers of it who were left in the unrestricted use of their powers and faculties, that so through means of them the revelation of Heaven might ally itself with both the thoughts and the language of earth. And if, in doing so, the Most High was pleased to turn their very imperfections in literary qualification and expression into a means to accomplish His purpose, He is responsible for these no more and no less than He is responsible for the employment of human instrumentality at all. There may be a difficulty in answering the question, 'Why has God employed the imperfections in grammar or style of the sacred writers to express His truth, when He might supernaturally have made their language perfect?' But the very same difficulty, and in a shape certainly not less formidable, meets us in answering the more general question, of which this objection is only a particular instance, 'Why has God employed frail and sinful men at all to speak His will, and record His inspired word, when He might have used the sinless agents, or written it with His own divine hand, without using imperfect instrumentality at all?'

The difference between the most perfect and the least perfect forms of human speech is a thing that must be infinitely little in the eye of God, and indeed in the sight of any other intelligent being than man himself. And the question of the distinction between the two must sink into insignificance, provided that in both there is an infallible expression of the wisdom and truth of God, and positive error in thought and word is forbidden to mingle with the result. Defects to any amount in the literary character and form of the written record are no defects at all, judging by the standard of what was contemplated in revelation, and what was needful for a divine rule of faith and practice to men.

The grand wonder, or the grand difficulty, in inspiration is, how it is possible for the Spirit of the eternal God to join Himself to fallible and sinful creatures, and to be a fellow-worker together with them in the production of the Bible; and so to employ their human will and activity, their thoughts and words, as to express by means of them His own uncreated wisdom.

The mystery of such a union is a mystery to be explained, or rather a mystery inexplicable, on any scheme of inspiration which does not discharge from it the supernatural altogether. It is but a minor form of the general difficulty which presents itself to us, when asked to explain in what sense the Spirit of God is accountable for the imperfections in language or style of the human instruments employed by Him for the purpose of making infallible conveyance of divine revelation to man.

Is there no union of the Spirit of God with imperfect man as intimate as the union of His supernatural power with the minds and pens of the men whose Hellenistic Greek has provoked the criticism and the objections of the impugners of inspiration? His extraordinary influences are mingled and identified with the conscious activity of mind and will in every act of the Christian life in the instance of the believer, although every act is itself imperfect, and pervaded throughout by sin. His ordinary influences are co-extensive with and interpenetrate the natural life of every creature, animating and actuating the actions of all men in the freedom and diversity of their varied character of good and evil. In all these cases the same question may be raised as to the sense in which, or as to the degree in which, the Holy Spirit is connected with the moral character of the actions done,—actions which could not have been done without His presence and co-operation; and in all these cases the question remains a difficulty unanswered. It can be no peculiar objection to inspiration, that it is beset with the same difficulty. Arguments against inspiration drawn from such a quarter, although very frequently urged, are not worthy of any detailed notice. It is enough, with a view of answering them by anticipation, to lay down the general position, that imperfections proper to the sacred penmen as authors, and not involving untruth, are quite consistent with the doctrine of plenary inspiration.

IV. In meeting the objections which have been urged against inspiration, the fourth position which it is proper to state is, that the exposure of the sacred volume to all those



causes which affect the integrity and purity of the text of other books, is quite consistent with the doctrine of plenary inspiration. Those imperfections which are due, not to the literary deficiencies of the authors themselves, but to the effects of time and the failure of copyists, and which are found more or less in the case of all ancient manuscripts, are not incompatible with that one miracle of revelation and inspiration, which impressed with the features of infallible truth and divine authority the sacred volume at the first. This is so obvious, that it might have been unnecessary formally to announce it, had it not been for the frequency with which a misconception on this point has given origin to objections to inspiration.<sup>1</sup>

The supernatural intervention of God, granted once for all to secure the infallible transcript of His own thoughts to the page of Scripture, was limited to that special object. There was no miraculous interposition afterwards vouchsafed to protect the inspired manuscript from the unintentional errors of copyists; from the waste or mutilation of time; from designed falsifications of enemies during the period of its manifold transcriptions, and its lengthened transmission from the original authors down to the present day. There has happened accordingly to the Bible what has happened to all other ancient books, that the text is no longer one and the same in the many manuscript copies which we have of it; but there have been introduced a multitude of various readings, always differing from and occasionally contradicting each other. The distinction between the Bible and other books,—the one being an inspired revelation from God, and the other not,—has had a marked effect upon the comparative integrity of the text, as affected by these various causes.

First, the belief that it was the word of God widely promulgated, necessarily caused a vastly greater multitude of copies of the Bible to be taken by transcribers to answer the demand, than in the case of any other book; and consequently there emerged from the increased number of transcriptions an in-

<sup>1</sup> Alford, vol. i. p. 21, 5th edition.

crease in the number of the various readings differing from the original text. But secondly, the very same belief that the Bible was the word of God, inspired by Him, led to a more frequent reference to the inspired original, and to a more rigid comparison between it and the copies of transcribers ; so that although, in consequence of the greater number of copies, the differences in the readings might be more in number, yet, by reason of the more frequent appeal to the original text, they were smaller in amount, and confined within narrower limits, in respect of their importance, than in the case of any other ancient book. The more extensive diffusion of the Scriptures, and their more frequent transcription, have caused the various readings to be more numerous ; while the more rigid comparison with the original and inspired text has made them less important than in the instance of any other ancient document.

It is not difficult, from the experience and history of other books transmitted from early times, to lay down with sufficient accuracy the limits within which it is possible for such variations in reading to occur in the case of Scripture. These limits are very narrow indeed ; and within them the diversities in reading may be numerous, but at the same time must be unimportant. No continued miracle has been performed to prevent the introduction of such various readings into the text. We have no formal guarantee for believing that it is impossible for such various readings to run counter to each other, so as to give rise, in the very text which we receive as the best authenticated, to the existence of statements of fact and truths at variance with each other. It would be difficult to prove that such contradictions, derived from the inaccurate transcription or accidental errors of manuscripts, cannot exist in the authorized text ; although, judging by a comparison with other books, the probability of such an occurrence is not very great, and although it is certain that, if such errors occur, they must be very minute and insignificant in their character. From such inaccuracies in the text, the doctrine of plenary inspiration furnishes us with no exemption. The friends of the doc-

trine do not pretend to have in their possession the immaculate text which came from the inspired author. Inspiration was given to secure once for all a text absolutely free from error and infallibly perfect, but not, by a supernatural intervention for thousands of years, to preserve that text from accident or corruption, such as all other books and manuscripts are liable to.

The objections that have been brought against plenary inspiration, from the imperfections and various readings of the text, have no show of reason in them, except by forcing upon the doctrine consequences disclaimed by its advocates. They assert that there is evidence in Scripture to show that its authors wrote under the supernatural influence of the Spirit, so that of everything they wrote it may be said it was given by the Spirit. But they do not assert and do not believe that there is any evidence in Scripture to prove that a continual miracle has been vouchsafed, to guard the original writing of the inspired men from subsequent deterioration through time and transcription. On the contrary, they disclaim such a doctrine as destitute of all Scripture warrant, and contradicted by actual fact.

But in addition to such a disclaimer, the advocates of plenary inspiration challenge their opponents to prove that there is any necessary connection between the doctrine, and the perpetual miracle of the preservation of the original text from the injuries of time and transmission; as if in holding the one they must be regarded as committed to the other. No such connection can be shown to exist. The one miracle embodied in a text infallibly perfect when it came from the hands of its inspired authors, does not necessarily, or even naturally, suggest the idea of the repetition or continuance of the supernatural intervention for the purpose of preserving it in the same perfection for ever; as if it were impossible for God to work a miracle for man's benefit once for all, unless He renewed it continually for the preservation of the benefit conferred.

It has been argued, indeed, that a plenary inspiration is useless and unmeaning which secures an infallible text once for all, and then abandons it to the accidents and mutilations

of time, and careless or corrupt transcription. The objection, however, may readily be disposed of.

First, it is not true, as is urged in the objection, that a divinely perfect standard of truth, or an infallible text of Scripture given by inspiration at first, is of no value if the miraculous intervention is not repeated throughout all time for its no less infallible preservation. Judging by our experience of the transmission of other books from ancient dates, we have the best warrant to say that the fingers of time, or the worse fingers of careless or corrupt copyists, have imposed upon the inspired text variations or uncertain readings within very narrow limits indeed, not detracting beyond an indefinitely small amount from the integrity of the original. But in addition to this, the fact that the original was the word of God and not the word of man,—a supernatural inspiration from heaven, and not the product of earthly wisdom,—has been the great secret why these variations or doubtful readings have been far less considerable in importance than they would have been had the Bible been a human book. The perfection of the divine original has maintained at a higher standard than they would otherwise have preserved, the human transcripts made of it, and restrained within narrower limits the errors incidental to transcription.

Secondly, even although we could not show, from its obvious use and importance, as a means for preserving a higher standard of purity in the text, any reason for inspiration at first, if the inspired original was to be left afterwards to the unsafe keeping of time and human transcribers, yet this, in point of fact, would be no objection to the employment by God of plenary inspiration for the benefit even of the first readers of the inspired page. We know that there was the oral teaching of Christ and His apostles, pregnant with the supernatural inspiration of God. That inspiration was limited in its aim and use, except indirectly, to the generation who heard it. The inspiration was for them. The infallible word spoken perished almost with them who listened to it, having been speedily lost amidst the accidents and corrup-

tions of the oral tradition, which, with unsafe keeping, might preserve it perhaps for a single generation or two before it was lost. And even could we assign no reason arising out of the advantage derived from it in subsequent times for a like plenary inspiration having been vouchsafed to the written word at first, we would have a full warrant, in the parallel case of the inspired oral word of the first Christian teachers, to assert that the mere fact that the inspiration once given was then abandoned to the accidents of time, is no objection whatever to the evidence we have for its original bestowment. That inspired and infallible word once spoken by apostles and prophets, and so speedily lost, must, according to the argument of such objectors, be still more useless and unmeaning than even that written word which, although exposed to a similar, was not exposed to an equal, deterioration through the lapse of time.

Thirdly, the objection, apart from the analogous case of the inspired oral teaching witnessed within the early Church, is altogether untenable. The various readings, and the minute although appreciable differences in which they diverge from each other, have no effect at all upon the grand fact, that through means of the supernatural intervention of God, His own eternal wisdom speaks to us from the page of Scripture with a truth that is infallible and an authority that is divine. The narrow margin that must be allowed for uncertain readings does not in any practical sense or for any practical purpose interfere with this doctrine; and it interferes all the less, and the uncertainty is all the more a vanishing quantity, because the plenary inspiration of the original secures that the first standard, from which the readings vary, was itself divine. If there were any force in the objection that has often been urged, of the doubt that we have in consequence of uncertain readings of what the inspired text originally was, it would be an objection that strikes with much greater force against the theories of the objectors who hold a partial or merely human inspiration, than against an inspiration perfect and divine.



These principles furnish an answer to objections, if not the same, yet arising from the same source, which accuse the doctrine of plenary inspiration of denying the value and superseding the use of translations of the original, in which form alone it can reach the vast majority of those who seek instruction and life from its teaching.

Here also it is plain that the objectors mistake the limited objects contemplated by inspiration. They forget that, having accomplished the one end of securing once for all an infallible standard of right and wrong embodied in the written word, inspiration did not contemplate the further object of securing an indefinite number of translations of that word into other languages equally infallible with the original; nor, in failing to secure this, did it lay a greater disability upon those who might attempt to convey to others, through the medium of their own tongue, a version of the one perfect record, than they would have experienced without it. Whatever loss, in point of thought or expression, has been necessarily suffered by the inspired original, through the process of translation into other languages, has been not more, but less, upon the supposition of a plenary than upon the supposition of any other and inferior kind of inspiration at the first. The translation from an original fraught with the plenary inspiration of God, supposing the translation to be equally faithful, must carry with it more of the mind of the Spirit than a translation from a record only partially inspired; while the very circumstance, that in the one case it is the divine word in the strictest sense which the translator has to deal with, will secure for it, generally speaking, a more perfect and faithful translation than in the other case, when he has to deal with nothing beyond the word of man.

Those two elements of plenary inspiration in which its distinctive character and importance consist,—namely, *infallible truth* and *divine authority*,—are not tied to certain forms of language, and do not exclusively reside in a mysterious selection of charmed words. For anything we know to the contrary, the same infallible truth and divine authority might have

been embodied in forms of expression different from those actually employed in the sacred volume; and the very facts and doctrines taught us there might have been taught with equal accuracy and assurance through the medium of other words. The thoughts of God in the revelation which He has granted, are not to be identified with the mere expressions in Hebrew or Greek which convey them to our ears, as if they could not have been conveyed otherwise. And neither in the case of translations in which wholly different words are employed, nor in the case of various readings in which one word out of many may be uncertain, are we to account the infallibility and authority of the revelation to be dependent in such a manner upon the form of language, as to be set aside or neutralized by the one or by the other. The divine certainty and the divine authority of the doctrine given by God are no less infallible and absolute when they speak to us through the thought, in whatever way, truly presented to the mind, than when they speak through the words which have been selected as the medium in the original text for presenting it. The difference between the original and the translation from the original, if admitted to be faithful and accurate,—or the difference between the original, and the same as affected and altered by the various readings which have any reasonable support from the proper evidence that authenticates the text,—is not a difference which makes the Bible in the one case to be the word of God, and in the other not: in either case it is to all intents and purposes the message of God to our souls; and it is the voice of the Spirit speaking to us still with infallible truth and divine authority.

The objection brought against a plenary inspiration of Scripture, from the uncertainty attaching to the text in consequence of various readings, is an objection that goes much further and deeper than the objectors themselves probably are aware.

Is it argued that plenary inspiration is useless or impossible, unless the first miracle that made the original record infallible were reproduced in the preservation of it ever after, and in

the supernatural exemption from future imperfection conferred? The argument, if stated in general terms, would lead to the assertion that an objective standard of truth in any form is vain or impossible, unless by some infallible interpreter the possibility of mistake in the application of it in every case were excluded, and the objective truth were translated into subjective certainty in the mind of every man to whom it appealed.

Once for all God has given by His own inspiration an infallible record of His mind and will as a rule of faith and duty to man; but in the process of the transmission of the divine word from the past ages to ours, and from its original authors to other men, he has instituted no perpetual miracle to guard the transmission from the effects of their carelessness or frailty or error. And in this we see nothing more than the same method of procedure which He has adopted in the case of individuals in their access to truth in general, of whatever kind. The lessons of truth written in the page of nature are in themselves indubitably certain; the objective record of God's wisdom and works in the universe of His power is infallibly true. But He has made no miraculous provision for the conveyance of the outward truth with unerring certainty to our minds, so that in the study and interpretation of nature we shall be kept from error, and the facts and truths revealed to us from without shall be answered by a corresponding and infallible belief within. In this instance no one complains that the objective truth in nature is worthless, because our subjective belief of it may be wrong.

In like manner, God has put into the hands of men one Bible, and no more than one, as a standard of truth and right; but in the process of the transmission of the discoveries of faith and duty contained in it, to the understanding and conscience of the individual, God has instituted no infallible interpreter to guard him against the effects of his own ignorance or inattention or mistakes, and to make unerring conveyance of the outward truth to the inward mind. By the help of the ordinary methods of historical evidence

applicable to other cases, which guide us in judging of the integrity and the purity of other ancient books, a man may come to have a moral certainty that the copy or translation of the Bible in his hands, is to all practical intents and purposes an undoubted transcript and exhibition of the original text as it came from the hands of its authors. By the aid of the recognised and common laws of interpretation which guide us in understanding other books, the reader of the Bible may in like manner come to have a moral assurance amounting to complete practical certainty, that his understanding of its statements is not a misunderstanding, and that the objective truth in the written page is identical with the subjective faith which he is conscious of in his heart. But there is no perpetual miracle in the one case, or infallible interpreter in the other, to exclude the possibility of error; men having been left to the ordinary aids and methods of moral evidence to warrant and sustain their faith. And the absence of both the one and the other is no argument against either an infallible Scripture written at first by inspiration of God, though afterwards entrusted to the fallible keeping of human hands, or an objective standard of truth perfect in itself, though only to be applied and used through means of the imperfect study and interpretation of men.

## CHAPTER XIII.

### CRITICAL OBJECTIONS.

WE have asserted that the personal individuality of the inspired men, in all its varieties of development, is compatible with the doctrine of plenary inspiration. We have argued that their fallibility, manifested in errors of word and deed at other times, is no less consistent with the infallibility with which they spoke and wrote when under supernatural direction. We have affirmed that their imperfections as authors when possessed by the Spirit, is entirely accordant with the perfection, as respects truth and authority, of what they wrote. We have maintained that the blemishes of the text due to the injuries of time and errors of transcribers, have no effect practically upon the question of the infallible character of the original. But it is important to deal more closely still with the form and manner of Scripture teaching, in order to meet and obviate current objections to the doctrine of plenary inspiration.

V. Another position, then, which we would lay down is, that the presence in Scripture of many statements not statements of God, and neither adopted by Him nor sanctioned by His authority, is quite consistent with a plenary inspiration of all Scripture by God. It is of moment, both for a right understanding of the doctrine of plenary inspiration, as well as for a right interpretation of Scripture generally, clearly to apprehend the meaning and bearing of this statement. More especially, in dealing with the common objections to inspiration, it is desirable to carry it along with us,



considering the amount of misconception that prevails in connection with it. The position is an extremely simple one, and nearly self-evident when rightly understood; but it has been often misapprehended and practically forgotten.

The Bible might have been framed upon a different model from what it actually exhibits. It might have been constructed so that God personally, or through the medium of His human instruments, should have been the only speaker throughout,—Himself directly uttering its facts and asserting its doctrines, and the sacred volume containing no record of the words and deeds of other parties, and no mention of the views or sentiments or proceedings of any but Himself. This is at least a possible conception; and had it been realized, the Bible from beginning to end would have been a monologue, in which God alone was the speaker, personally addressing us in every announcement of fact and every declaration of truth which it contains. But the very opposite of this is the character of the sacred volume, and the form in which its contents are exhibited.

The Bible is not a simple direct address from God, maintaining, from beginning to end, the form of a statement, in which He personally is the speaker, and all the assertions of which are His assertions, and all the facts His facts; on the contrary, it is a volume of the most diversified character and miscellaneous composition, as regards its contents. Christianity, because a religion which from the first has identified itself with human history, and has been embodied in the facts and deeds done upon the earth, has naturally or necessarily led to that historical form in which revelation is presented to us, and which makes the Bible to be full of the actions and thoughts and feelings and words of men. There are other parties besides God introduced into the narrative: the life and history, the opinions and conduct of men, good and bad, are embodied in the record; we have direct statements and communications from the lips of God mixed up with the report of what others said and did; we have dialogue and narrative, and quotation and reasoning, and history and poetry, and

argumentative and didactic composition, incorporated in the varied and voluminous authorship,—sometimes God personally or through the mouth of His servants addressing us, and at other times the words of men, good or bad, or even of fallen spirits, conveyed to us through the same record. Such being the varied form and the miscellaneous character of Scripture revelation, it is a very plain, but at the same time a very important, principle to lay down, and one susceptible of most extensive application, that all these statements of such different and even opposite origin and import which we find intermingled in Scripture, although all recorded there by the inspiration of God, are not to be looked upon as statements made by Him, or adopted by His authority, or sanctioned with His approbation.

The Bible embodies in its diversified page the falsehoods of Satan and of men,—the speeches, opinions, feelings, and actions of parties who had no claim to be regarded as authorized by God, or even right in what they said and did,—sentiments expressed, and doctrines avowed, and deeds done, which had no sanction of divine appointment, or even human approval. As a record of even such things, the Bible is inspired by God; but the things themselves have no authority or sanction from God. As a narrative of the actions and opinions and words of others, it is all of God; but these actions and opinions and words are not His, and in multitudes of cases they have not even His countenance or approbation. He does not speak through the words nor act through the actions of such parties, even although the words and actions are incorporated with His infallible inspiration. As a record of sentiments that were expressed and events that happened, the Scripture is wholly God's; but we must look much further than this, and examine into what Scripture actually tells us, before we can decide whether or not these events were ordered by His appointment or marked by His approbation, and whether or not these opinions were uttered or adopted by Him. The principle thus generally announced is a very obvious and undoubted one, and goes far to remove

many of the objections charged upon the doctrine of plenary inspiration ; although it is not to be denied that the application of it in particular instances to the text of Scripture involves questions of considerable delicacy and difficulty.

Whatever amount of difficulty there may be in the practical application of the principle, it must be carried out in the interpretation of Scripture as it invariably is in the case of any other book. We cannot deny to the book of God the same allowance that we readily grant to the work of any human historian. No profane author is held responsible for the words uttered, or the opinions avowed, or the actions performed by the historical personages introduced into his narrative, unless by explicit statement or otherwise he shows that he adopts and sanctions them with his approbation. So, in like manner, the Divine Author of the Bible is not to be made responsible for the sentiments or conduct exhibited, the views entertained, or the deeds wrought by the parties whose speeches and actions are embodied in the inspired narrative, unless there be evidence to show that He has either appropriated and adopted them as His own, or at least marked them with His approval.

It may sometimes be a difficult case of interpretation in the instance of Scripture, as in the instance of other books, to determine how far or in what way the author gives any opinion of his own, or adopts and sanctions the views or actions or words of other parties who act and speak in his page, through his report of them. But the ordinary rules of interpretation which enable us to judge in the case of any human history, will also enable us to judge in the case of Scripture, showing what are and what are not the opinions and statements in it adopted or sanctioned by God. The doctrine of plenary inspiration does not imply that every proposition announced, every opinion avowed, every action recorded in Scripture, bears upon it the impress of divine approbation, or is even right or true in itself. Assuming the doctrine of plenary inspiration to be established, or, in other words, assuming that the Scripture is all the authorship of God, the further

question remains still to be decided by its own appropriate evidence, as to whether or not, in His inspired statement of the actions and words and sentiments of other parties, He has either adopted them as His own, or signified His approval of them.

The bearing of this general principle upon Scripture generally, and in particular upon the objections brought against plenary inspiration, may be illustrated in a variety of ways.

(1.) The sentiments avowed by parties who are introduced into the pages of Scripture, and who speak through the report of their words given to us, sometimes are and sometimes are not the utterances of the divine mind. We have examples of both these cases. Whether coming to us with the approbation of God, or destitute of that approbation,—whether adopted or disclaimed by Him, these opinions and sentiments have been put upon record by His infallible inspiration; and in either case, the report or narrative of them is equally true, and equally of God. But in the one case we have evidence that the opinions expressed have the seal of God and His approbation; in the other case we have no evidence warranting such a conclusion, but rather, on the contrary, ground to believe that they are destitute of any such sanction, or marked with His disapproval.

For example, a great part of the book of Job is a report or narrative of opinions and sentiments expressed by his friends, not only without any warrant from God, but in direct opposition to His mind. ‘Ye have not spoken of Me the thing that is right, as My servant Job has,’ was the rebuke pronounced by God Himself on the broachers of these views. They were contrary to His mind and truth, and yet they were committed to writing by His Spirit. They were so repugnant to His mind, that ‘His wrath was kindled’ against the authors of them; and yet the record of them in the Bible is God’s, and equally divine with any other portion of the inspired volume. Here we have an example of statements of opinion inspired in the sense that they form part of the Word of God, but not recorded there as the expressions of His mind or truth. The record of opinion is of God; the

opinion is not of God. The views and sentiments of Job's friends have been put on permanent record in the inspired volume, not because they are true or because they are from God, but in spite of their being untrue, and from men who spoke unadvisedly with their lips.<sup>1</sup>

But there are instances of an opposite kind in Scripture,—instances in which the opinions expressed by the speakers are plainly proved to be not only their own personal opinion, but also the mind of God, and therefore authoritative and divine. The example of the Apostle Paul, when giving his opinion on the case of marriage, as recorded in the Epistle to the Corinthians, and to which I have already, in a slightly different connection, had occasion to refer, is a case in point. 'Now, concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord; yet I give my judgment as one that hath obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful. I suppose that this is good for the present distress; I say that it is good for a man so to

<sup>1</sup> As a remarkable instance of the total misapprehension of the question in debate, which prevails among the impugnors of plenary inspiration; and as a specimen of the objections founded on the refusal to distinguish between what is recorded and what is asserted or sanctioned by inspired men, I quote the following from Coleridge:—'Say that the book of Job throughout was dictated by an infallible intelligence. Then re-peruse the book, and still, as you proceed, try to apply the tenet: try if you can even attach sense or semblance of meaning to the speeches which you are reading. What! were the hollow truisms, the unsufficing half-truths, the false assumptions and malignant insinuations of the supercilious bigots who corruptly defended the truth; were the impressive facts, the piercing outcries, the pathetic appeals, and the close and powerful reasonings with which the poor sufferer—smarting at once from his wounds, and from the oil of vitriol which the orthodox liars for God were dropping into them—impatiently, but uprightly and nobly, controverted this truth, while in will and spirit he clung to it; were both dictated by an infallible intelligence? Alas! if I may judge from the manner in which both indiscriminately are recited, quoted, appealed to, preached upon by the *routiniers* of desk and pulpit, I cannot doubt that they think so, or rather, without thinking, take for granted that so they are to think,—the more readily, perhaps, because the so thinking supersedes the necessity of all after-thought.'—*Confessions of an Inquiring Spirit*, p. 38.



be. Art thou bound to a wife? seek not to be loosed. Art thou loosed from a wife? seek not a wife.' Now, did we know as little of the Apostle Paul in regard to office and authority as we know of the friends of Job, we might perhaps say, and it would be difficult to disprove it, that this opinion of his on the question of marriage had as little sanction from God as their opinions had; and saying so, the occurrence of such an opinion in Scripture—destitute, as we might allege, of divine authority—would no more invalidate the proof for its plenary inspiration, than the occurrence there of the false and unauthoritative sentiments uttered by the patriarch's pretended comforters. In both cases, it would be an example of divine inspiration employed to record opinions not themselves divine or divinely sanctioned, but rather human. But in the case of the Apostle Paul, we know what we do not know of Job's friends: that in virtue of his peculiar office as an apostle, he was an inspired and infallible man in all his official teaching; and that opinions of his, so uttered and pronounced, although expressed in the form of his personal judgment on a point in dispute, were truly inspired and impressed with the authority of God.

In the question of marriage he tells the Corinthians that he had no formal decision of Christ to quote upon the particular case; but as one who had grace given to him to be faithful in his inspired office of apostle, he would give his own opinion or judgment. In such circumstances it was plainly seen to be not only the opinion of Paul personally, but, because of his inspired and apostolic character, it was the opinion of God speaking through him. In the case of Job's friends we have clear intimation that their sentiments expressed in Scripture were repudiated by God; in the case of Paul we have no distinct evidence that his opinions expressed in Scripture were sanctioned by God. Both instances are equally consistent with the doctrine of plenary inspiration. Inspiration is not responsible for those opinions which it reports, except when it is shown by a fair interpretation of the language that they are adopted or sanctioned as the mind of God.

It may be difficult, in the application of this general principle, always to determine the extent to which God does or does not lend His countenance to the sentiments embodied in His own inspiration. There may be few examples so clearly put beyond the reach of doubt or controversy as the two now referred to; there are many intermediate instances where there is no express censure pronounced upon the erroneous views uttered, and no such explicit warrant as that of apostolic authority to sanction the right judgment pronounced; there are cases where nothing but a careful study of the whole circumstances, and of the language employed, will enable the interpreter of Scripture to say whether the opinions incorporated with the inspired narrative are right or wrong. But the truth of the general position laid down is undoubted, whatever delicacy in special instances there may be in the application of it; and it is sufficient to relieve the doctrine of plenary inspiration from the burden of many of the objections charged upon it.

(2.) The quotations from other parties or sources made by the Scripture writers afford an illustration of the same general principle: they sometimes are, and sometimes are not, statements of the divine mind; they express views and opinions, some of which are adopted by God, or sanctioned by His authority, and others which have no such countenance. In either case they are perfectly consistent with the doctrine of plenary inspiration, being equally parts of God's word when found in the sacred volume. But here, as in the former example, the principles and methods of interpretation that enable us to judge whether an ordinary historian did or did not adopt as his own the quotations of opinion or fact that he has made from another, must also enable us to judge whether, in incorporating them into His inspired word, God did or did not adopt as His own the quotations of opinion or fact which we occasionally find embodied in the written page of inspiration.

In the twenty-third chapter of the Acts of the Apostles we have embodied in the narrative, as part of the inspired record,

a letter written by Claudius Lysias, the captain of the Roman guard at Jerusalem, to Felix, the governor of Cæsarea. There is nothing in this document, or the circumstances connected with it, which distinguish it from the composition of any other military officer in the ordinary discharge of his duty, or mark it out as possessed of any higher authority than what might belong to the letter of any other Roman soldier. It might or might not contain misstatements of fact, or unfounded assertions respecting Paul the prisoner, in connection with whose accusation and trial it is written. We have no reason whatever to believe that it does. But in the circumstance of its quotation at length by the inspired historian, and its now forming part of the sacred record, we have no evidence or warrant for asserting that the document contains what has the sanction or authority of God. Inspiration has to do with it only in so far as it has recorded it, and given an infallibly true transcript of it as it proceeded from its human author.

But there are examples of quotation in Scripture of a different kind, in which the language and manner in which the quotation is made are evidence that the inspired writer who quotes also adopts and sanctions the quotation, and lends to it the authority of his own inspiration. Such examples we have in the numerous quotations from the Old Testament found in the New, where passages are quoted from the more ancient record to illustrate the facts, or confirm the truths, or explain the doctrines set forth in the later Scriptures. In these cases it is not, like the letter of the Roman soldier, a quotation introduced from another quarter, without any voucher given for the truth of the statements contained in it; but it is a quotation adopted by, and made a part of, the statement of the inspired man who uses it, and who, by the terms and manner in which he introduces and uses it, shows that he makes it his own, and stamps it with the seal of his own infallibility.

The accidental circumstance that the quotations from the Old Testament found in the New are made from an inspired volume, and not an uninspired, does not, strictly speaking,

constitute the evidence that, when found in the New Testament, they are adopted by the writer, and employed by him to speak his mind. Had they been quotations from a profane author, and not from an inspired,—like Paul's quotation from the Greek poet,—they might have been proved, by the way and terms in which they are employed, to have been quotations made for the purpose of speaking the mind of inspiration. In point of fact, many of the quotations from the Old Testament found in the New, are made, not from the inspired text of the Hebrew original, but from the uninspired version of the Septuagint, differing as it does occasionally from the Hebrew; the sacred penman using a freedom in this respect which does not in the least affect the question, whether or not in quotations we have satisfactory evidence that he appropriated the language quoted as his own for the purpose of expressing the mind of the Spirit. It is a point to be determined by the ordinary laws of interpretation in the case of the Bible as much as in the case of any other book, how far and in what way the quotations made by the author are adopted by him as true, and he makes himself responsible for them. If they are adopted by the author as true, and made part of his own statement of fact or opinion, then from whatever source they may come, and how much soever they may differ from the original text from which they are taken, the author, if a merely human author, pledges his own veracity for the truth of the statements they express; if an inspired author, he pledges the veracity of God.

The limits within which quotations may differ from the original text from which they are taken, in point of language and form, without being liable to the charge of being untrue or misquotations, must depend upon the purpose for which they are made, and the terms in which they are referred to. There is a wide latitude in this respect allowed in human writings, without the least suspicion of unfaithfulness or even inaccuracy attaching to the author. From the most distant allusion to the language, in which no more than the form of expression is appropriated, up to the entire transference both

of language and meaning from the page of one author to the page of the other, we find quotations employed by human writers, and not justly or reasonably chargeable with misquotation. The object in view, and the manner and terms of quotation, must in all cases determine the limits within which the language and application of the quotation may vary from the original quoted.

If an author who quotes adopts merely some convenient or happy or pointed words from his original, he may be allowed to do so although his meaning and object and application in them should be widely different from their primary import and use. If, on the contrary, he adopts the language of another for the purpose of establishing and proving his own statements of fact or opinion by means of it, he cannot be allowed to do so unless the language of the original really bears the same meaning and admits of the same application as those which the quotation is used to express. Such a freedom in quotations is notoriously common in the case of human authors, and within such limits cannot be fairly chargeable with misquotation. And the same freedom must be allowed to inspired authors, ranging as it does within bounds perfectly consistent with truth. Such a latitude belongs to them as authors left free to the development of all the diversity and individuality that pertained to them without inspiration, and of which the supernatural gift did not deprive them.

But there is a latitude more extensive still that must belong to them as inspired men when making use of quotations from Scripture in Scripture. The quotations from the Old Testament found in the New are often marked by the peculiarity of affixing to the language of the quotation a meaning unknown to the original author, and not in his view when he employed the words quoted; and yet a meaning which the words truly and properly bear, and which may be used for the confirmation of facts and doctrines beyond what he could possibly have been acquainted with.

Such a mode of quotation could not be justified in the case of ordinary writings and writers. But to those who, in the



proper sense, accept the fact of the supernatural inspiration both of the original writings quoted, and of the quotations made from them, there can remain no difficulty in understanding how the same God who put into the Old Testament predictions and types and histories a meaning which the prophets who recorded them did not know, may have also enabled the New Testament writers who quoted them to find out that meaning, and to express it truly, although far beyond what was understood before. This use by the New Testament writers of the ancient Scriptures, although it has no parallel in the employment of quotations by human authors, is yet warranted by the more than human meaning which holy men of old were supernaturally assisted to embody in their writings, and by the divine teaching through which their inspired interpreters in later days were taught to recognise and to declare that meaning, although hidden from the original writers. The manner in which such quotations are made by the writers of the New Testament, and the language they employ in connection with them, show that they appropriate and adopt them as their own, and as expressive or confirmatory of their own statements. So far from this mode of quotation furnishing objections against the doctrine of plenary inspiration, it is only such a supernatural inspiration that can explain and account for it.

The same general principles apply to the case of those general quotations from or references to more ancient documents, out of which some of the writers of Scripture are supposed by a school of modern critics to have drawn more or less the materials of their writings. It is not necessary or desirable, in discussing the limited question of the inspiration of Scripture, to diverge into collateral controversies respecting the origin of the Scripture books, or to refer to these at all, beyond what is necessary to understand their bearing on inspiration. It depends very much on the form in which these theories as to the origin of some of the sacred books are advocated, whether they do or do not in reality contradict the doctrine of plenary inspiration.

The hypothesis that the narrative of Moses in the Pentateuch was in part or in whole compiled from previously existing documents, and that his history has been borrowed from formerly extant but now long lost documents of prior and unknown authors, is one that does not affect the doctrine of plenary inspiration in the least. In like manner, the parallel theory with respect to the origin of the Gospels, that they have been compiled from one or more previously existing but now long perished histories, or from documentary sources and oral tradition variously combined, is a theory that does not necessarily run counter to the doctrine of supernatural inspiration. The principles involved in that doctrine are perfectly consistent with such theories, which may be easily stated in such a way as to be brought into accordance with it.

Inspiration, as we have repeatedly had occasion to say, left the inspired historians under the power and regulation of the same laws and influences that guide other authors in their compositions, with the single exception of supernaturally preserving them from error. It is quite compatible, then, with the free development of the individuality of the sacred penmen as authors, and with their using for the purposes of their authorship the means and the materials and the helps which other authors use in composing their productions. It is compatible with using their own eyesight, and narrating what they saw, if spectators of the events that they had to chronicle. It is compatible with searching out the facts and studying the reports of other men, and the traditions handed down, if through such means they might have perfect knowledge of the events they recorded. It is compatible with adopting, by means of quotation from other authors, or reference to existing documents, the facts they had to narrate, if taught by supernatural revelation so to do, for the purposes of their composition. There is nothing in all this inconsistent with the supernatural inspiration of God present and co-operating with them in their work; unless, indeed, it is believed that the divine and the human co-operation in all cases and under all circumstances is impossible.

The recent theories that would refer the origin of some of the Scripture books, or parts of books, to prior documents or existing traditions, may be safely left by the friends of plenary inspiration to stand or fall by their own precarious evidence. The principle involved in them can be readily squared with the facts of inspiration. According to these theories, the narratives of Moses and the New Testament evangelists were made up of facts borrowed from previous documents or traditions,—the quotations being accommodated and adjusted by the respective authors to the purposes of the inspired histories given us, in the Pentateuch and in the Gospels, of the events with which the old and new economies open. Such quotations would fall under the general principle we have been endeavouring to illustrate. Adopted from other sources by the sacred writers, adjusted to the purposes of their inspired narratives, both selected and fashioned by the inspired man under divine influence to express the mind of the Spirit, they would be to all intents and purposes part of the Word of God, sanctioned by Him, and therefore not less infallible and authoritative than any other portion of it, and not less bearing the seal of inspiration.

The friends of plenary inspiration have no occasion to plunge into the unprofitable and endless controversies that have been stirred in connection with the genesis or production of various books in the canon. In whatever manner we may profess to account for their origin and diversity, yet, if the process from first to last by which they were produced was undertaken and carried on and completed under the supernatural power of the Spirit, the question of inspiration is not affected by it in the least. All the natural processes through which an author without inspiration may be supposed to have gone about and constructed his history, were competent to the Scripture authors when supernaturally controlled and guided by God, except any process that involved error or imperfection. The appropriation of the facts recorded by others, the adoption of materials previously preserved by tradition, the quotation from writings extant

before, are perfectly compatible with inspiration; and the manner in which the inspired men made use of them to express their own mind, would be evidence enough that, for the truth of all that they appropriated and employed, they pledged both their own veracity as men, and also, in virtue of their inspiration, the veracity of God.

(3.) Another illustration may be mentioned of the general position that the presence in Scripture of many statements not made by God, or adopted by Him, is perfectly compatible with the doctrine of plenary inspiration. In the report of the conduct of parties introduced into the page of Scripture, we have sometimes the statements of deeds done by the appointment and according to the will of God, and sometimes the record of acts done without any such appointment, and in opposition to His will. This is too plain to require illustration; and yet the fair application of this principle to Scripture, would rid us of many of the popular objections to plenary inspiration.

At one time we find in the inspired history, David's sin met by the divine rebuke, 'Thou art the man;' and at another time we find Abraham's faith signalized by the divine approbation, 'Because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; in blessing I will bless thee.' We see Peter, left to himself without divine direction, dissembling at Antioch, and his sin singled out to be recorded for ever, along with the censure pronounced upon it by his brother apostle; again we see Peter acting by divine appointment, and as the organ of God, at Cæsarea, baptizing the first Gentile convert, and opening the door of the Christian Church to the extra-Jewish world. In both cases the record which embodies the actions of the different parties is God's, but only in one of the cases is the action from God; in the other case the action is contrary to His will.

But while, in such distinctly marked examples, there can be no difficulty felt in understanding the extent to which God stands responsible for the deed, and approves or disapproves of it, there are numerous instances to be found in Scripture

of the actions of parties recorded there, in which it may be difficult at first sight, and until careful examination is given to the whole language and circumstances, to say how far or in what way the divine countenance is given or not given to the action. Not only so, but many examples occur in which the inspired historians report conduct in the case of the parties that appear upon the field of the Scripture history, in regard to which it may be impossible from the narrative to gather the expression of any opinions of their own, one way or other, in the shape of approval or disapproval.

In short, we must be prepared to interpret the Word of God upon the same principles of latitude allowed to its authors, which we do not refuse to extend to the authors of any human composition. An ordinary historian, in recording events and actions and conduct of other men, which he may have occasion to speak of, may or may not in the course of his narrative give his own opinion upon their moral character, and his own estimate of their claim to be accounted right or wrong; and it is only in so far as he directly or indirectly adopts or sanctions them, that we justly account him in any measure, beyond the mere report of them, responsible for the proceedings he records. It is the same with Scripture. In multitudes of instances God cannot be regarded as responsible, in one way or other, for the actions and conduct of men recorded in Scripture, beyond the simple fact that He has recorded them. Sometimes, indeed, He has branded these actions with the stamp of His distinct disapprobation; sometimes we can see that they are done by His express appointment, or with His approval; but in many cases the inspired narrative expresses neither approbation nor the reverse, being totally silent beyond the simple record of the action, and giving the reader no clue, from the history itself, to infer either the divine countenance or discountenance of the deed. The greatest crimes and the highest virtues are recorded in complete silence as to the character of the deed,—the inspired word emitting no voice of censure or of praise, of rebuke or of approbation. In such instances, God, as the



author of the inspired volume, is no more responsible for the actions which it records, than is any profane historian for the persons or proceedings embodied in his history, when he simply tells us what is said and done, without departing from his own province as an historian, and sitting in judgment on the merit or demerit of it.

Simple and undeniably true as this principle obviously is, the application of it to Scripture, with the same degree of fairness with which all readily apply it to profane history, would meet and obviate by anticipation very many of the objections which have been brought against the doctrine of plenary inspiration. It would remove out of the way the objections which assume or insinuate that an inspiration plenary and not partial makes God responsible for the morality, imperfect and low, of Old Testament persons and times; as if He justified, or at least treated with indifference, the sins and shortcomings recorded without blame in the earlier histories of His Church, or as if He adopted, because He has not in many cases specifically repudiated, the inadequate standard of right or wrong recognised among the saints of the ancient dispensation, instead of only suffering it for a season, because of the hardness of their hearts.

That the sins, both of good men and bad men, are often recorded without censure, or indeed any intimation of the divine opinion one way or other, is readily admitted. That persons are often spoken of with approbation, and their faith rewarded and blessed, whose varied character of good and evil, or whose imperfect life, presents to view many features censurable, and which are not censured, and moral actions wrong, but yet not visited with any recorded condemnation, is also freely conceded. That it may be often a difficult question of interpretation to decide, in the case of the narratives of the inspired volume, to what extent God expresses any opinion at all in reference to actions immoral or otherwise, which are often chronicled in silence, is also a point not to be disputed. But all this is no more than what we witness every day in the case of human authorship, without affording

any ground whatever for charge against the author. And the same principle upon which we would be prepared to vindicate an ordinary historian in such a case, will also serve to show the groundlessness of the objections, brought from such a source, against the plenary inspiration of Scripture. Inspiration embodies and preserves in infallible keeping the actions of men, but does not make God the author of such actions, or responsible for them.

In the case of what appears to be immoral actions recorded with approval, the point to be determined must be, whether the action is itself sinful, and whether in the representation of it there is evidence that it met with divine approbation. This must always be a question of interpretation as between God giving an inspired record of the deed, which in itself implies neither approval nor disapproval; and God in that record giving indications of His countenancing or commanding the deed.

*First*, on a right interpretation of the passage, it may perhaps appear that the act, while approved of by God, was not sinful.

Such, probably, is the proper interpretation to be put on the act of Jael, the wife of Heber the Kenite, in putting to death Sisera, the captain of the host of Jabin, the king of the conquered but still formidable enemies of Israel, the Canaanites. That the war of the Israelites against Sisera's master was itself a lawful war, and approved by God, cannot be doubted; it was not only on their part a defensive war, but also a war of principle, as between God's people and God's enemies. The deed which Jael did, if it had been done by one of the native Israelites, could hardly have been regarded as anything which a case of lawful war did not justify; in which killing is not murder, and stratagem against the enemy is not deceit. The complexion of the act is not altered by the circumstance that Jael belonged not to Israel, but to the family of the Kenites. That family, since the days of Jethro, who acted as guide to the Israelites in the desert, had followed the fortunes of God's people, and cast in their lot with

them. They had accompanied Israel to the land of Canaan, and found a permanent inheritance with the tribe of Judah; and although not one with them by birth or descent, were practically incorporated with them, so as to form but one people for peace or war. In such circumstances, what was lawful to an Israelite could hardly be unlawful to Jael. Her husband had, in all likelihood, gone with Israel to the battle from which Sisera fled; she was left alone in the tent, when she found in her hands the enemy of her adopted people, and of her God; and the act by which she slew him vindicated the quarrel of both.

There is nothing in the narrative that necessitates us to believe that her invitation to Sisera to turn to the tent, and her subsequent hospitality, were part of a preconceived plan to get him into her power, in order to effect his destruction. The language of the narrative is perfectly compatible with the supposition that the thought of destroying her enemy arose in her mind subsequently to her peaceful reception of him in her tent; and the terms of commendation in which the deed is spoken of in the Song of Deborah, would warrant, if they did not require, us to believe that Jael acted under the immediate and sudden impulse of a supernatural direction. That there was no actual war, but, on the contrary, peace between the king of Hazor and the house of Heber the Kenite, does not alter the case; for this can be understood in no sense contradictory to the fact that the Kenites were identified with the fortunes of Israel, whether for good or evil,—that they had suffered in the oppression of their adopted nation by Jabin, and would share in the deliverance,—and that the interests and position of the two could not be separated. It can only mean that Sisera presumed upon the fact that the war which he led on was not formally declared or directed against the handful of Kenites, but against the powerful nation among whom they dwelt unobserved. In this view there is nothing that can justly be called treachery in the act. Even without a supernatural command from God, it might perhaps be justified; with such

a command, it ceases to have the appearance of being unlawful.

Or, *secondly*, on a fair construction of Scripture language, we may find that, although the act recorded is undoubtedly sinful, yet there is nothing in the record that indicates the countenance or sanction of God.

The falsehood of Jacob, when by deceit he gained from his father the blessing which Isaac had destined for the elder and favourite son, obviously belongs to this class. The sin is recorded by the inspiration of God, but it is recorded without anything in the narrative to warrant us in saying that it was looked upon with divine approbation. It was the means, indeed, through which the divine purpose was accomplished in the rejection of the elder and the preference of the younger; and it was a turning-point in the life of one signally marked out by the favour and countenance of God. But unless we are prepared to assert that God cannot make use of the wickedness of man, and overrule it as an instrument to accomplish His ends without lending it His sanction; or that He cannot mark with His approbation a man whose life exhibits the chequered variety of good and evil incident even to the best, it is impossible to affirm that Jacob's deceit received countenance from God. It is recorded indeed without note of blame in the history at the moment; but it was a sin which found him out, in the shape of similar falsehoods practised by his children upon himself.

The deceit of David, and other examples of a similar character, recorded in Scripture without any indications of the divine displeasure, belong to the same class of actions undoubtedly immoral, but not represented in the history as carrying with them the sanction of God.

Or, *thirdly*, on a right consideration of the case, we may find that the act recorded is unlawful in ordinary circumstances, but has been made lawful by the express command or warrant of God.

The spoiling of the Egyptians by the Israelites on the eve of their departure, and the extermination of the Canaanites

on their entrance into Canaan, are well-known examples of this class of cases. The divine command cannot, indeed, be regarded as changing the nature of right or wrong, or turning what is essentially evil into good. In the case of those moral precepts which belong to an immutable morality, we could not conceive the divine precept either changing the nature of the duty, or absolving moral agents in any circumstance from the performance of it. But in the case of positive precepts, the command or prohibition of God may change the whole nature of the duty and the deed: so that what was unlawful without the command, may be made lawful by it; and what was justifiable in the absence of any prohibition, may be unjustifiable in the face of it. As the sovereign Disposer both of property and life at all times, He could give, by His warrant to the Israelites, a right in regard to these which they could not otherwise have,—a right more especially which it was lawful for them to exercise against the Egyptians and the Canaanites, when these nations by their sins had forfeited all title to the possession of either.

Or, *fourthly*, on due examination, we may find that the act is sinful, but that the approbation indicated in connection with it applies not to the immoral act, but to the general conduct or character of the agent mixed up with it. The indications of the divine approval may be given, not in consequence of the act, but in spite of it.

This undoubtedly is the case in the instance of Rahab, and her conduct in relation to the spies. She is marked out in the Epistle to the Hebrews for special honour and commendation among the long list of Old Testament saints who lived and died in faith, and were accepted of God. But neither there nor in the narrative of Joshua is there anything to warrant us in extending the judgment of approbation pronounced upon her to every part of her conduct, and to include under it the deceit or falsehood through means of which she accomplished her object. It was in spite of this that her faith is approved of. The same explanation applies to multitudes of other instances, in which it has been objected that



the inspired penmen lend their sanction to the imperfect morality of the Old Testament saints. The conduct of the Hebrew midwives, and the approbation given to it by God, falls in some respects under the same head.

It is not enough, then, that we find a certain opinion, or fact, or statement recorded in the Bible, to warrant us to assert in regard to it that it is adopted by God, or sanctioned by His approbation. The doctrine of a supernatural inspiration by Him is quite consistent with the presence of multitudes of statements that in no way owe their origin to Him, beyond the actual report of them, and are in no way approved by Him, except as to being put on record and embodied in His word. The words, the actions, the sentiments, and statements of the parties introduced to our view in Scripture, are their own, not His; and He can be made responsible for them only in so far as, by the ordinary principles of interpretation, He can be shown to have declared His own mind as in accordance with them. Beneath what we find on the surface of the sacred volume, there is a question of interpretation to be disposed of before we can say whether or not what we find stated in Scripture is stated by Scripture; or, in other words, what we find reported by inspiration is really guaranteed or affirmed to be right by inspiration. The right application of this principle, simple and obvious although it be, would remove out of the way many objections brought against plenary inspiration.

Why so large a portion of the inspired revelation of God should be wholly occupied or partially interspersed with the mention of persons, and the record of opinions and words and actions, which are not only destitute of all countenance or authority from God, but also void in many cases of all claim to be regarded as morally right or free from sin, may be a question of a somewhat difficult kind. The answer to such a question can only be found in those general principles which have made Christianity itself to be an historical religion, and the record of it an historical book; and which have determined the structure, form, and contents of the

Bible, as they are presently seen, to be upon the whole best suited for the purposes of a standing revelation from God to man.

Why again God has not in every instance accompanied a record, so diversified by good and evil, with a commentary containing His own judgment upon it, and distinctly announcing His own mind in the way of approval or condemnation of what is said or done, so as to leave the reader in no doubt as to the character of it; why we have been left, in the case of Scripture, to those ordinary principles of interpretation applicable to other books, to discover the divine opinion as to what is right or wrong in Scripture persons and events, may also be a question of difficulty. The answer to this second question comes from a similar source, and is to be sought for in the general fact of the designed adaptation of the Bible to the moral and spiritual nature of man as an exercise for faith, and a discipline to the readers of it.

But whatever difficulty there may be in answering such questions, or whether any complete answer can be given to them or not, does not in the least affect the doctrine of plenary inspiration, which is in no way responsible for such difficulties. The mixed character of the Bible as a record of both good and evil, and the difficulty in some cases of separating between the two, is a difficulty of interpretation which is not lessened by any theory of inspiration partial and imperfect, which yet retains the presence of God in Scripture at all. The doctrine of a plenary inspiration does not involve God in the responsibility of all the words or opinions or actions which we find recorded in the sacred volume. Whatever difficulty there may be in applying such a principle in particular instances, the frank and intelligent recognition of it would go far to relieve the Scripture doctrine of inspiration of the objections brought against it.

VI. A sixth position must be laid down in order to meet the objections urged against Scripture inspiration. The limitations of human thought and language manifested in the

case of other writers, are, in the instance of the Scripture penmen, quite consistent with the doctrine of plenary inspiration.

I had occasion previously to refer to the diversity of conception and expression, arising out of the diversity of individuals, exhibited in the inspired page, and perfectly consistent with supernatural inspiration. But in addition to diversity, there is limitation necessarily belonging to thought and language in the instance of their use by any human author, and the evidence and fruit of which must be embodied in all their writings. Ignorance and error are no constituent or inseparable elements of human nature, and both of them were removed by that supernatural gift of revelation and inspiration which came upon the men selected to record the message of God. But limitation both as regards thought and language, conception and expression, is an inseparable and necessary element in the case of every human author, and could not have been removed without such a change in the constitution of their minds and their forms of speech as would have left them men no more. And hence we find in Scripture all the marks and fruits of that limitation which properly belonged to them as men, and which it was not necessary for the purposes of inspiration to remove.

Limitation of this kind, both in thought and speech, is not incompatible with truth. If it were so, there would be no truth in the interchange of thought between finite beings at all. There could be no truth except in the case of the Infinite One. In one sense it may be affirmed that none but God sees and understands the reality of things as they actually exist in the infinite number and variety of their relations; and that His mind alone can comprehend absolute truth. But relatively to finite creatures, truth exists, even although it may be impossible for their minds to embrace the infinite, or to take in the countless relations and aspects of even the humblest thought or simplest fact presented to them. In this sense men know what is true, even although they may not know the whole truth, or be able with their narrow faculties

to grasp, or with their imperfect powers of speech to declare, more than a limited portion of the whole as it is seen and known by God. Incompleteness in the conception, and incompleteness in the expression, of what men know and see, are not inconsistent with truth as between man and man, and not inconsistent with truth in the sight of God.

There has been laid upon His human creatures by the Creator, in consequence of the limitation of their being, and the imperfection of their faculties, no necessity of falsehood, as if the very law of their nature, as creatures, made it impossible for them either to understand or to speak the truth. There may be, or rather there must be, an incompleteness both in their apprehension of facts and truths as compared with the perfect apprehension of God, and in their modes of expressing or exhibiting them to others as contrasted with His. But such incompleteness carries in its bosom no character of falsehood; human thought and language, though straitened and limited to know and speak only in part, underlie in consequence no obligation to untruth: the ideas and words are no more than in part, but they are not contradictory to the whole and perfect reality. Supplemented by what neither human thought nor speech can overtake, the partial conception and expression would become complete; and in the meantime, the necessary imperfection of their condition as creatures, and the law of limitation which extends over all their ideas and speech, are completely compatible with truth both in the sight of God and in the sight of man.

The fruits and the evidences of all this are manifest in the inspired page, and are no more inconsistent with plenary inspiration than any other of the sinless peculiarities of humanity embodied in the writings of inspired men.

(1.) The necessary limitation of human language as a vehicle of thought unavoidably leads to a greater or less degree of incompleteness in the Scripture expression of truth. By incompleteness I mean that the idea is presented in one or more of its relations and aspects, but not in all of them;

and in this sense is incomplete as compared with the absolutely perfect comprehension of the same idea by God, although not incomplete in reference to the purpose of inspiration, or the object contemplated in Scripture. It is in consequence of this poverty and imperfection of human language, that in the ordinary use of it we see the same words taken in more than one sense, and representing more than one idea; that the same term is employed sometimes literally and sometimes figuratively; that the arbitrary signs of human thought are often fitted much more to express the appearance than the reality of truth; and that in making use of them, it is beyond our power, after careful study, and the anxious selection of the most suitable language, to exclude ambiguity, or to prevent the possibility of doubt in interpreting it. The origin of figurative language, the double sense of words, the transitive and secondary meanings of terms, a large portion of the fallacies in argument, the ambiguity and inaccuracies of expression so impossible to be avoided in the representation of abstract or even sensible truth,—are due to a large extent to the necessary imperfection and poverty of human speech.

All this is familiarly recognised in the case of language spoken or written among men. The inadequacy of words, singly or in combination, to express with perfect completeness human thought, is taken for granted in every system of interpretation applicable to human compositions. Perhaps of all other instruments used by man, language is the most difficult entirely to master, and to turn with precision and accuracy to the purpose for which it is used. But whatever difficulties or imperfections are found in the use of spoken or written speech, are all compatible with those limits which mark human veracity. If there be an essential limitation in the power of that organ which expresses thought, and is the instrument for circulating knowledge among men, it is a limitation which does not necessarily imply falsehood or error in their statements of opinion or fact. By the necessities of their speech, there may be in a certain sense incompleteness in the representation of thought between man and man; but



by no necessities of speech are we compelled to utter what is positively untrue or contradictory to reality. When untruth or error finds entrance into human writings, it is due to some other cause than the law that imposes a limit upon the power or range of language. It may arise from intentional falsehood, or from unintentional ignorance; but the incompleteness of human speech is not inconsistent with human truth.

What we find thus exhibited in profane writings, we also find reproduced in Scripture. Inspiration has wrought no miracle to change the nature of man's language, or to exempt it from those limitations natural and necessary to it which make words, in every case and in a certain sense, an inadequate representation of thought. We find in Scripture the same latitude in the use of language, and the same incompleteness in its range and power, that we see in any other volume. We find words employed sometimes to stand for one thought, and sometimes for another; they are applied at one time in their literal, and at another time in their figurative sense; oftener in the popular than their scientific meanings,—more frequently to express the appearance than to define the abstract reality,—and lying open to all those causes of ambiguity and doubt and uncertainty in interpretation to which written speech in other instances is exposed. The proper and essential character of language as an instrument and representative of thought, must have been changed by some miraculous intervention of God had it been otherwise. And hence we must look for the same marks and fruits of limitation and incompleteness in Scripture that language exhibits in the case of any ordinary book. The acknowledged difficulty of interpreting the sacred volume, and the numberless interpretations, are sufficient evidence of this.

But as in other instances, so in the Word of God, all this is consistent with human veracity. Language, marked though it be by incompleteness, and straitened in its range and power, has imposed upon those who use it no necessity for statements untrue or contradictory of the reality; and

in the written compositions of inspired men, as in other authorship, there is truth along with that limitation universally characteristic of human speech, which in many instances makes it an inadequate representative both of the idea within the mind, and the objective truth without. Such limitations could not have failed to leave their impress upon the inspired page, unless the nature and structure of human speech had been miraculously changed from what it actually is. Yet this imperfection of language has nothing in it of the character of falsehood, either when used by man or by God. The doctrine of plenary inspiration does not imply or demand a different kind of truth in the statements of Scripture, from what is found in the statements of perfectly truthful men.

This general principle is obviously true in itself, and is extensively applicable to Scripture in the way of meeting many of the popular objections to inspiration. The Scriptures have, for example, been charged with using modes of speech inconsistent with the discoveries of modern science, and at variance with the actual phenomena of nature, because in speaking of them incidentally they employ the erroneous language of common life. The charge is more especially made in connection with the facts of astronomical and geological science; and the inference is drawn, that the Bible cannot be written by inspiration of God.

Now the general principle that has been laid down in connection with the use of language in Scripture, is sufficient to a large extent to meet these objections. I do not say that the principle of itself is sufficient to meet all the objections which, under the name of scientific difficulties, have been brought against the Bible; for not a few of these really amount to a charge of such contradictions between the facts and truths of the Bible and the facts and truths of nature, as no latitude or freedom in the use of language can explain away. Such objections fall under a different head of the argument. But when we find the adoption by the Bible of the common language of life in connection with astronomical or geological facts turned into an argument against its

veracity or inspiration, because such language, judging by the standard of scientific men, is inaccurate, it is time to lay down the very obvious and undeniable proposition, that inspiration neither requires nor sanctions a use, in the inspired page, of language not found in ordinary writings, or a kind of truth different from the truth of common life.

If indeed the Bible had been, not the record of religious belief, but a scientific treatise, whether astronomical or geological, and had professed as its object not to make men acquainted with the grace of God for their salvation, but with the truths of science down to its most recent discoveries, then the matter would have been different. In such a case we would have had a miraculous anticipation, thousands of years before, of modern discoveries, and a record of them in language scientific and appropriate to the facts, but unintelligible to its readers. But the object of the Bible being to make known to men religious and not scientific truths, and any reference to the latter being only incidental, it has employed the language which men at the time employed in ordinary life to describe them; language which, generally speaking, declares the outward and sensible appearance, rather than the scientific aspects and relations, of the facts described. In doing so, the inspired penmen have run counter to no truth, and are chargeable with no falsehood.

The adoption by men of the language of common life, to describe the appearances of nature, rather than the scientific relations of the phenomena, was a use of language unavoidable, if they meant it to be understood; and entirely truthful, because in accordance with the truth of the facts in their relations to the senses and observation of men. The appearances described were as real and true as the scientific relations not described, but waiting the discoveries of modern science; and the language which expressed the one was as correct and free from the charge of falsehood, judging by the object that was in view by the employment of it, as the technical language which modern science has used in its record of the phenomena, judging by the object contemplated in the scientific descrip-

tion. The limitations imposed on human language make it in many cases impossible to select words which shall express, at the same time, and with equal truth, the popular appearances and the scientific relations of facts. Words cannot do both, but they may do the one or the other separately. It is enough for truth, if, in expressing the one, the language, according to its recognised use, does not run counter to or contradict the other. There is no example of such contradiction in the Bible. Interpreting the language employed according to the ordinary and recognised acceptation of it at the time, it truly represents the appearance of the fact, as men uninspired would have represented it; while there is nothing in it to exclude the technical representation of the scientific relations of the same fact, not then known, and only afterwards discovered. The language of common life accurately expresses one truth, while the language of science not more accurately expresses another; and the adoption by the Bible of the former, without prejudice to the latter, correctly expresses the truth in the sight both of God and of man.

The range of language in its different applications, and the extent to which it may be accommodated to express different facts, and yet be consistent with truth, must depend in every case upon common usage at the time, which determines the meaning of it, and fixes the limits within which the application is recognised. But the same limits and the same latitude that are allowed to profane authors in the use of words, in consistency with truth, must be allowed to inspired authors also. The gift of supernatural direction to preserve them from error, does not restrict them in this respect. What common usage sanctions in the language of ordinary life as compatible with veracity, and not liable to the charge of falsehood, has a right to claim the same privilege in the case of inspired Scripture.

Language may be used phenomenally, or to express the appearance rather than the reality of the thing described (the sun rises), when by common consent the language cor-

responds to the familiar appearance ; and because it does so, there is no falsehood intended or practised on either side, whether those who speak and hear the words know, or do not know, that they are at variance with the scientific fact. Or language may be used analogically, to express one thing through its likeness to another, or through the likeness of their effects (the hand of God to signify His power), when the resemblance is known and recognised ; and, in consequence, there is no deception meant or experienced, although the things identified in word are in reality widely different. Or language may be used figuratively, when one object is the natural or recognised symbol of another, and we speak of the second under the name of the first (fire to denote the anger of God), there being no misunderstanding when the figurative resemblance is acknowledged, although there is no actual sameness in the things spoken of under the same name. Such a latitude in the use of words is perfectly consistent with real truth in the spoken and written language of men. It is no less consistent with truth in the Word of God. The limitation of human language renders such a use of words in different senses and applications unavoidable. The law which fixes the range within which such applications of language may extend consistently with truth, is the same in ordinary and in inspired writings.

(2.) The necessary limitation of the human mind, exhibited in all its conceptions and productions, comes in aid of the imperfection of language to give more or less a character of incompleteness to all expressions of truth by men. It is not only that language inadequately or partially exhibits the idea within the mind, but the mind itself is limited in its powers of conception, and inadequately receives the impress of the truth presented. It is to a large extent in consequence of this imperfection in the mind itself, that we see the same truth differently apprehended by two different men, even with the same opportunities of being cognizant of it,—the one more fully or completely apprehending and embracing the truth presented than the other. Original diversity in the



character of the minds will produce a corresponding diversity in their conceptions of the truth contemplated. But even were there no such diversity in the minds that perceive, the necessary limitation of all, and the inadequacy of their conceptions to the truth conceived, would result in one man apprehending it under one set of its aspects and relations, while a second apprehended it under another and a different; each of the conceptions being true to the reality in part, and the difference between the two being that each is a part, and not the whole, of the same truth.

Such differences arising from the incompleteness of the human mind, and always exhibited in its statements of truth, are not necessarily false or inconsistent with each other. So long as they are confined within the limits due to the natural and necessary imperfection of the human mind, they amount to incompleteness, in the shape of a more or a less full conception and expression of the fact, but not to any defect of truth, as if such statements were contradictory to the fact. The incomplete statement by one man, when compared with the no less incomplete and different statement by another, may disclose an amount of divergence which, in the absence of fuller knowledge, may look very like contradiction. Yet it requires perhaps no more than a complete knowledge of the fact in its different relations to see that each statement is true, though true only as a part of the whole; and that there is indeed nothing beyond a more full statement of the aspects of the fact omitted by one or by both, to reconcile the partial representations of it with each other and with the whole truth, and to remove every appearance of discrepancy. All this is familiar to us in the case of the spoken or written statements of ordinary men. It is no less found in the statements of inspired men.

The application of the general principle to the objection brought against the doctrine of plenary inspiration, is sufficiently obvious. We have no occasion, in defending that doctrine, to deny the existence of divergences in Scripture between its various authors, as compared with each other, and

of differences between their statements and what we know to be truth, which it is difficult for the Christian apologist to reconcile. We have no occasion even to deny that there are apparent contradictions which it is not in our power, in our present state of knowledge, to harmonize. But our ignorance of the way and means of reconciling them, in some certain number of instances, is no proof that they cannot be reconciled, or that they are actual contradictions. In multitudes of cases we can prove that these differences, apparent or real, between the sacred penmen, are not contradictions but omissions in their statements,—not real discrepancies, but the mere incompleteness of the narrative on one side or other, or on both,—differences which the insertion of the missing fact or truth into its proper place would at once explain and reconcile. In many instances we can show that these differences are due to the necessary limitation of the human mind, that can see only one side of a truth, or one aspect and relation of a fact, at once, and not all sides and relations at the same time, and in the same view; and that the partial conception of the truth, or incomplete representation of it, duly supplemented, all appearance of contradiction would utterly vanish. And being able, in the majority of cases, to do this, we are justified in arguing, that even in those instances where we are not able in our present circumstances of knowledge to do it, the failure is due to our ignorance, and not to any real contradiction or falsehood to be found in Scripture.

The law of human thought and speech that impresses the image of their incompleteness upon every written word of man, is perfectly consistent with truth, whether in the sight of God or in the sight of man; and the intelligent application of the principle to the question of plenary inspiration, would answer by anticipation many of the objections that have been charged against it.

The series of propositions laid down is intended to meet the case of objections to inspiration,—very many, and very

commonly urged,—which are founded upon facts more or less true in themselves, but which, even though true, afford no sufficient ground of charge against the Scripture view of the doctrine. A right understanding of what the doctrine is and implies, would show that, in so far as they are founded on facts disclosed by a critical examination of the Scripture text, they do not form any relevant or conclusive argument against it. But there are outstanding and residuary difficulties which such general principles are not sufficient to resolve, and which no removal of the misconceptions very often entertained in regard to the doctrine of plenary inspiration can answer. There are objections founded, not upon a misunderstanding of the Scripture view of inspiration, but upon alleged facts, which, if true, would be decisive against it, and which cannot be properly dealt with except by proof that the facts are unfounded.

There are allegations of historical untruth brought against the Bible, which would be falsehood in the case of any other book; which no explanations of the latitude, in respect of conception or language, to be conceded to the Scripture writers in common with other authors, or of the imperfection conceded to their text as well as to the text of other written documents, can explain, and which, if substantiated, must be decisive against the doctrine of plenary inspiration. There are allegations of scientific untruth—such, for instance, as those charged upon it in connection with the history of creation, and the antiquity and unity of mankind—which no interpretation of its language according to ordinary or recognised principles can fairly meet, and which can only be answered by evidence to show that the apparent contradictions are not real. There are allegations of moral untruth, founded upon its doctrines or precepts, which Scripture cannot evade by the profession that it reports, but does not adopt them in its record; or that it chronicles the opinion of others, but not its own. There are allegations of untruth in point of facts plainly asserted or authorized, and guaranteed by the inspired writers, which, if made good, would be conclu-

sive against their veracity or their knowledge as men and as authors. The objections founded upon such allegations of falsehood are to be met by no explanations as to the proper meaning of inspiration, which could never properly answer them ; but only by evidence to prove that the alleged facts are not true facts. Numerous as are the objections to plenary inspiration originating in a misconception of the doctrine, and removable by a proper explanation of it, there are yet a second class of objections which cannot be dealt with in such a way.

I have no intention of examining in detail this second class of objections, first, because such an examination would occupy space which cannot be given to it ; and secondly and chiefly, because it belongs to a different controversy from that connected with plenary inspiration. Such objections are not so much objections against inspiration, as against the Bible being in any sense a communication from God, or in any sense historically true. Almost all, if not all of them, amount to a denial either of the sufficient knowledge or sufficient veracity of the Scripture authors, and are to that extent inconsistent with the authenticity and credibility of the Bible, even as a human record of a supernatural revelation from God. Historical untruths and contradictions amounting to demonstrable mistakes ; scientific inaccuracies running counter undeniably to natural phenomena ; and moral defects in doctrine and duty which would be reckoned subversive of right and wrong in other compositions, if they exist in Scripture, deprive it of the character of perfect credibility, and lead us to look upon it as a book not to be believed.

If the facts on which such objections rest are well founded, it is both useless and impossible to attempt to show that the volume which contains them is inspired by God. If Scripture to an unknown and indefinite extent is not historically true, there is no Christian apologist that will waste time in the endeavour to prove that it is supernaturally true. The advocate of the plenary inspiration of Scripture has, properly speaking, nothing to do with objections which, if substan-

tiated, would not only prove that inspiration is impossible, but also prove that the Bible, even as an uninspired record of a supernatural communication from God, is false. These objections belong to a prior controversy, which must be settled, one way or other, before the debate on inspiration can be opened. Not until the Bible is accepted by both parties as the authentic and credible record of an extraordinary revelation, is it possible to deal with the question involved in inspiration, as to whether, in addition to the truth of man, we have in its words the infallibility and the authority of God. Objections to plenary inspiration, embodying or inferring a charge of untruth against the claims of the Bible to be regarded as the true record of a true message from God, are not to be dealt with in connection with the debate on plenary inspiration, but rather in connection with the wider and more general controversy between those who receive and those who reject the Bible as, in any sense, coming from God.

Into such a controversy this is not the place to enter ; and I have no intention therefore of dealing with the objections to inspiration which, resting on the allegation of falsehood and mistake in various forms in Scripture, go much further and deeper than a denial of the infallible supernatural guidance under which its penmen wrote. In the learned works of Christian apologists and Scripture interpreters easily accessible, there will be found materials sufficient to meet most of the difficulties of this class which have been charged against the Bible. There are instances outstanding, in regard to which it were unfair not to admit that the difficulties remain unsolved ; and that, after all that learning and ingenuity have suggested, the explanation that would harmonize truth with truth is yet to be sought for. But even in respect of these residuary difficulties, there are these two remarks which it is important to bear in mind.

First, The analogy of the past must not be overlooked in its bearing on the present position of Scripture interpretation. It furnishes a certain amount of evidence to show that the unsolved difficulties that remain will probably yield to future



investigation and study, or, at all events, though for a time they should not, are not insoluble. The experience of what has happened justifies the expectation; the difficulties in the way of the Christian apologist that looked the most formidable in other days, have in many instances ceased to be mentioned; and although new objections have been started, the work of interpretation and explanation upon the whole has been on the advance, and has been narrowing continually the margin of darkness. It is not the part of a Christian wisdom rashly to run into either extreme, of hastily adopting explanations of Scripture difficulties which may turn out to be unfounded, or of sitting down in despair, as if such difficulties were inexplicable. Much has been done in the past, and it is an argument of hope for the future. In regard to the many objections of reason or unreason still unanswered, the Church of Christ has no need to make haste, but rather to watch in faith, knowing that in quietness and confidence shall be her strength.

Secondly, Even in regard to those difficulties that appear to be the most formidable, and confessedly remain unexplained, it is impossible to assert and to prove in regard to any one of them that they are inexplicable. The analogy of former objections, yielding at length to the light which further knowledge and study have cast upon them, and rendering up the secret of their strength to better directed investigation, is not the only argument to suggest that what is presently unsolved is not insoluble. The very ignorance on our part which forbids us to understand the manner or way in which apparent contradictions are to be harmonized, is an ignorance which equally forbids us to understand that they are incapable of being harmonized. It is impossible to say in regard to any one difficulty which at present presses upon Scripture interpretation, that no amount of additional knowledge that God could give would clear up all that now waits explanation, or shed light on what is now confessedly enveloped in darkness. And if it be impossible to prove this in any case, the probability that the difficulty or apparent contradiction is

really due to our ignorance, is much greater than the presumption that it results from untruth in the case of the sacred volume. Such a consideration affords, indeed, no explanation of the objection, but it affords a very strong argument indeed for believing that an explanation is possible. And it will afford a conclusive motive for the Christian, when he finds himself in the presence of such difficulties, to strengthen himself in God, accepting them in the spirit of the promise: 'What thou knowest not now, thou shalt know hereafter.'

## CHAPTER XIV.

### INSPIRATION AND INTERPRETATION.

THE conclusions to which an examination of the Scripture evidence leads on the subject of inspiration, have a direct and extensive bearing on the method to be adopted, and the principles to be applied, in the interpretation of the sacred volume. The Bible is in one sense the authorship of God throughout ; the same volume is in another sense the authorship of man in all its parts. And the question naturally or unavoidably is suggested,—In what way or to what extent does this truth tend to modify or affect the principles of interpretation which are applicable to Scripture, and by which we are to gather the true meaning of its statements? The inquiry is an important one. The different and opposite views entertained on the question of inspiration necessarily lead to different and opposite views as to the manner in which the mind of God is exhibited in His word ; and as to the way in which we are to arrive at the real import and substance of the revelation.

With one class of interpreters inspiration is wholly and exclusively subjective,—the illumination and elevation of the religious nature and powers of man to apprehend divine truth for himself, and to record in the sacred volume the results of his discovery and belief and experience. A Bible drawn from such a source, and written under such an influence, must contain and exhibit the mind of God in exactly the same way in which it is embodied and expressed in the writings of any Christian man who, under the gracious teaching of the Spirit, has himself learned, and desires to record, the truth he believes, according to his belief

and ability. The system of interpretation applicable to such a record, is one that must make provision for, and be adapted to, the presence in the record of all those imperfections and errors that cleave to the writings even of Christian men.

With another class of interpreters, inspiration belongs to some and not to all portions of Scripture, and in those passages to which it belongs it is found in a larger measure in one as compared with another. A Bible constructed upon such a principle can contain and express the mind of God only in so far as, and no further than, the supernatural element is present in each portion ; while in other passages, and in so far as the human element only is present, it embodies and exhibits no more than the mind of man. The method of interpretation adapted to such a Bible must be one accommodated in every respect to the different characters thus belonging to its contents, as sometimes divine wholly or partially, and sometimes human altogether or in part ; and making allowance for the existence in the record of the mingled truth and error which in proportions unascertained, and indeed unascertainable, exist within it.

With a third class inspiration belongs equally to all portions of Scripture alike, the supernatural element not excluding the natural, nor the human shutting out the divine ; and the authorship of the whole being at the same time of God and of man. A Bible written on such a principle speaks the mind of God in a shape and measure very different from what is witnessed in other schemes of inspiration ; and the principles and methods of interpretation applicable to the record must differ in a corresponding degree.

It is plain that the nature and form of the written word whose meaning is to be ascertained, must to a large extent determine and define the canons of interpretation to be adopted in regard to it. The manner and the extent of inspiration,—the way and measure in which the supernatural element is found in combination with the human in the sacred volume,—must go largely to decide how far the ordi-

nary principles of exegesis applicable to any human composition are appropriate or not to the Bible. Stating the question in its most general form, the inquiry presented for our consideration is as to the relation between the inspiration of Scripture and its interpretation. Or, regarding it in the aspect more particularly suggested by the conclusions at which we have arrived, the question is, How does the fact of the plenary inspiration of the sacred volume bear upon the adoption and application to Scripture of the same rules and methods of interpretation that are available in the instance of ordinary human writings?

The maxim, 'Interpret the Bible in the same way and upon the same principles as you would interpret any other book,' has been confidently announced as lying at the foundation of all sound exegesis. There is much truth contained in the canon ; but there is also much truth which is not contained in it, and the absence of which gives to it something of the aspect, and even of the effect, of error. Viewing the Scripture volume from its human side alone, the canon is a sound and important one ; but viewing it from its divine side, it is but a half truth fitted to mislead.

The Bible, to a large extent, is like other books, and must to the same extent be dealt with and interpreted like other books. It is written in human language, and embodies the human thoughts and feelings of the men who wrote it. The language is subject to the ordinary laws of grammar and idiom which determine the use and meaning of language in other cases. The thoughts and feelings expressed are the thoughts and feelings of men whose minds move and operate and express themselves under the same conditions and laws, in all essential respects, that regulate the expression of other minds. Both their words and conceptions, their language and sentiments, take the mould and exhibit the impress given to them by the original diversity of the authors, by varying circumstances of country and time, by associations of life and society, by the occasions and emergencies that called them forth. The revelation of God speaks to us through the



medium of these human elements, and, divine though it be, cannot come to us in any other way.

The only representation upon earth of the unknown and invisible God that can truly be called an 'image' of Him, is to be found in the man Christ Jesus; and if we know God in the most perfect manner in which it is possible for us in our present condition to know Him, it is through the channel of those human words that spoke to us, and those human thoughts that appealed to us, and that human countenance that looked upon us, from God manifested in the flesh.

It is similar with that Revelation which has been given us in Scripture. Through the human elements of man's words and ideas and feelings, do we reach up to the divine elements of eternal wisdom and truth. In human language spoken in its freedom, in human history acted through its natural course upon the earth,—in the sentiments and feelings of men like ourselves,—God has given us a revelation of Himself; and it is only by entering into the meaning and spirit of the human thoughts and scenes recorded, that we can interpret and understand the supernatural embodied in them. Any system of interpretation that would put us in possession of the mind of God as written in His inspired word, must first of all make us acquainted with the mind of the men who wrote it; enabling us to hold fellowship with their thoughts and actions and words as moved and fashioned by the circumstances in which they were placed, and the particular emergencies that occasioned them. Up to this extent, it is true that the Bible is like any other book; and that to ascertain the meaning of the revelation contained in it, we must interpret it by the rules and methods applicable to other books.

But while in this sense, and thus far, the Bible is like other books, it were a serious mistake to think that in all respects it is like other books, and must be interpreted accordingly. The fact of inspiration does not neutralize or affect the human characters of the inspired writers as men or authors, in anything essential to them in these respects; so that their writings must in so far be viewed and read and interpreted

as human writings. That inspiration bestowed upon them an exemption from error, and a plenitude of divine truth which, except by the supernatural gift of God, they could not have possessed; so that in this respect their writings are not like those of other men, and must in so far be viewed and read and interpreted differently. It is important to mark how far their writings, as the fruit of a plenary inspiration, differed from other writings, and to what extent the ordinary canons of interpretation available in other cases must be modified in their application to Scripture.

I. The divine infallibility, which, in the case of inspired writings, is seen allied to the human instrumentality through which they were produced, distinguishes them from the writings of ordinary men, and to that extent modifies the canons of interpretation applicable to Scripture.

In the case of ordinary human authorship, the principles or methods by which we judge of its meaning and contents are not conceived or framed upon the supposition that all mistakes on the part of the writers, and all errors in the writings, are necessarily excluded. On the contrary, the object and endeavour are rather to separate between the truth and the untruth, and to elicit the former after making what allowance may be shown to be necessary for the ascertained imperfections and inaccuracies of the author. No canons of interpretation which we are accustomed to apply to human writings, can ignore those sources of error which are common to ordinary authorship. They are uniformly constructed and applied on the principle that a certain latitude must be allowed, even in the case of a perfectly authentic and credible writer, for the existence of errors in his statements of facts, in his expression of opinion, and in his conduct of reasonings. The possibility at least of imperfections and inaccuracies of conception and expression, of memory and judgment, of observation and deduction, is a thing taken for granted and silently proceeded upon by interpreters, even where we have complete knowledge and complete veracity on the part of the writers.

But while this is universally assumed in all endeavours to ascertain the contents and import of any human composition, the latitude conceded to error is confined within very narrow limits. Exclude the two cases of designed unfaithfulness and defective knowledge, and you also exclude the possibility of error beyond certain well-defined and narrowly-restricted bounds. With the assurance of complete veracity and sufficient information, we have also assurance against the chance of error, except what is involuntary and inconsiderable in amount. It is impossible to interpret any human writing upon the hypothesis that error is absolutely excluded from it, even in the instance of an author perfectly informed and perfectly trustworthy. But in such a case it is no less impossible to interpret it on the hypothesis of intentional error; or even error unintentional, but frequent and considerable in amount.

These two general propositions may be safely laid down in connection with the interpretation of any ordinary document. First, in the instance of a perfectly credible and authentic composition, any method of interpretation applicable to it must proceed on the idea of at least the possibility of errors, and with a view to separate the truth from the errors. Secondly, the assumption of errors or contradictions in the statements of the author, is not allowable, except in the extreme case in which no interpretation excluding them is possible or supposable. These two propositions are plainly true in regard to every ordinary writing from which human fallibility does not exclude error, but where complete truthfulness and sufficient knowledge exclude all but error unintentional and unimportant.

To what extent or in what way are these principles of interpretation modified or altered when the writing is not a human composition, but inspired of God?

The answer to that question must depend to a large extent upon the view of inspiration adopted, and upon the way and the degree in which it is supposed to determine the character and originate the contents of the sacred volume. In the case of those theories which assert an inspiration not supernatural in character or not plenary in extent, the door is left open for

error to an indefinite amount; and in seeking to ascertain the actual contents of the revelation embodied in Scripture, the method of interpretation employed must allow for its existence in a corresponding degree. Our canons of exegesis for the Bible will not differ materially from those that regulate the interpretation of any human writing full of the ordinary imperfections which human writings exhibit, when it is possible for an interpreter, guided by his own judgment, or by the opinion of the particular school of criticism to which he may chance to belong, to say in regard to any one passage of Scripture whatever, that here the author wrote with only a partial inspiration, and here again without any inspiration at all. In no theory of an imperfect and limited inspiration is there found any distinct or intelligible principle determining the degree of inspiration in one portion of the sacred volume as compared with another, or forming a check upon the licentiousness of individual opinion on the part of the critic, let loose without any guiding or restraining rule upon the Scripture text. His method of interpretation, in so far as regards the acknowledgment of more or fewer errors in the record, must depend almost entirely upon his own critical tastes.

The case is different in the instance of a Bible fashioned upon the principle of a supernatural and plenary inspiration throughout. The union of the divine and human element, in all the integrity and perfection of each, in every portion of Scripture, guarantees the exclusion from the authorship of the sacred writers of every error and imperfection that could belong to it as man's, and the possession of all the truth and infallibility that must appertain to it as God's. Whatever methods or principles of interpretation are applicable to human writings, must be applicable to Scripture, because it is a human writing; with this exception, that they must recognise the fact that it is not only human, but also divine. They must be modified and adjusted to meet the case of a record that has the double character of being both the authorship of man and also the authorship of God; and while they are appropriate to human compositions, they must

proceed upon the assumption, first, of a perfect knowledge of the revelation to be recorded, in so far as that knowledge was necessary to the recording of it, and secondly, of an infallible ability to record it aright.

In these respects Scripture differs from any human book ; and in these respects the system of interpretation applicable to Scripture must differ from that common to other writings. Errors of conception, of reasoning, of memory, of expression, are found in every ordinary author, the best authenticated and most credible, and must be presupposed and allowed for in any system of interpretation applicable to his writings. There are no such errors in a book that is not only human, but also divine ; and in sitting down to interpret its meaning, our principle of interpretation must differ accordingly.

II. The divine unity of thought which in the writings of inspired men is seen to ally itself to human variety, distinguishes them from all other writings, and in so far modifies our canons of interpretation applicable to Scripture.

The Bible is not one book, but many. It is a collection of writings ranging over a period of fifteen hundred years in the history of our race. It gathers within it the thoughts of many minds ; it speaks with the voices of many generations ; it represents the feelings and habits and opinions of many peoples ; it is the work of many hands ; it is the record of the modes of life and belief of the men, and of the deeds, of distant and very different ages. Its thoughts and language are adapted, like those of every other book, to express the mind of its numerous authors, writing under every variety of time and place and circumstances ; and are addressed to its original readers in such a way as to speak as really as any other books to the present condition and circumstances of their minds. Of the writers of Scripture at the distance of hundreds of years from each other, each belongs to his own day and place and nation, and speaks and writes to the men and times and circumstances in the midst of which he lives. Their writings may contain in them a revelation for all time and all people ;



but they had in the first place, and primarily, a meaning, and conveyed a message, for their own.

In the case of ordinary human authors so circumstanced, each speaking out of the thoughts of his own mind, as it is moved and influenced by the circumstances around him, and speaking with words adjusted to meet the thoughts and minds of those who, as his contemporaries, were his hearers, we should expect the utmost diversity in their writings, and such an amount of variety, or even contrariety, in their opinions and views, as to make it difficult to harmonize, and impossible to interpret them, the one by the other. It would be vain to seek to reduce to one system of thought and belief authors living at the distance of hundreds of years from each other, thinking according to the modes of thought peculiar to their day, and writing independently, and each under the influences of the particular emergency that called forth his writing. Still more would it be vain to attempt to elucidate the views of one author by the opinions of another, or to pretend to adopt a system of interpretation which, embracing all, should apply to them one standard, and bring together, for the purpose of mutual explanation or illustration, statements of men, 'a whole millennium apart.' Any rule of interpretation fitted or sufficient for such a case, would be founded far more upon the strong diversities and marked peculiarities distinctive of each author in his day and circumstances, than upon anything that they possibly could possess in common.

In the instance of the Scripture authors it is different. In so far as regards their productions as writers, they are indeed marked by all that diversity of character and form and tone which could distinguish human authorship. They are never seen to lose their individuality in the divine influence that possessed them, or to blend their diversity of character in the common character of inspiration that belonged to them all, or to forget that they are speaking to the men and case of their own day, in looking forward to the future for which they prophesied. But amid all this human diversity there is a divine unity that binds their writings into one. In virtue

of that one and undivided mind which moved and instructed all the penmen of Scripture from Moses down to John, there is a oneness of thought that is seen to pervade all their writings, however distant from each other in date, or different in outward character; and which is not broken, but only variously expressed, by the human diversity of thought through which it speaks. There is a unity in the Bible which will always be found in writings which are the utterances of one mind. Amid the varied forms in which it is exhibited, the truth throughout is the same. Coming from the same Divine Author, although conveyed through the channels of the many thoughts and words of different and independent human authors, there is a perfect sameness in the doctrine, although multiplied diversity in its form. From end to end of the Bible it is the same voice that speaks through the lips of ancient prophets and of New Testament evangelists; and therefore the utterance of truth is the same throughout. If a supernatural inspiration is confessed in all Scripture,—if above the human authorship so diversified and different, there be acknowledged a divine authorship, which never varies in respect of the one system of truth which it was the object of Scripture from beginning to end to reveal,—there will be no difficulty in recognising that higher unity that binds into one and harmonizes the human diversities which mark the Scripture writings.

The marked difference in this respect between the writings of inspired men and of profane authors, justifies and demands a different treatment to be applied to the interpretation of them. It were worse than folly, in the case of human authors separated by a thousand years, and by diversity of thought, language, and habits, to bring the opinions of one to explain the opinions of another; and to attempt to blend into one system their different views, so as to make the statements of any one of them the key to interpret authoritatively the rest. But there is no such folly in applying such a method of interpretation to Scripture. To refuse to apply it, is virtually to affirm that the human writers were the only authors of

their respective writings; and that the diversities of outward statement and character witnessed on the page of Scripture, are not harmonized and reduced to connection by the divine idea which underlies the human.

If the very first principle involved in the notion of a divine inspiration of the Bible is not to be denied, and if God, from Genesis to Revelation, speaks to us throughout by the men whom He inspired, there must be a doctrinal unity from first to last, which warrants and demands that, in interpreting its many books, we should look upon them as one authorship, in so far as regards the system of truth which they contain, and that we should read and interpret them as conveying to us the thoughts of the same mind. There may still be the diversities of language which belong to all human writings coming from different authors; and so far as the use of language is concerned, it may be vain to expect that the idiom or usage of one Scripture writer is to rule or explain that of another differently circumstanced as to time and other conditions. But in respect of the truth or doctrine revealed in them, the writings of Scripture must be taken as a whole, each helping to interpret and illustrate the other. They form part of one divine authorship; and, unless we hold that the many communications of the one and undivided Spirit are inconsistent with each other, we must be prepared to acknowledge the justice of that method of interpretation that would compare Scripture with Scripture throughout the whole range of the inspired volume, and make the one to interpret the other.

The principle of Scripture interpretation which has been so often objected against,—the principle of explaining what is doctrinally obscure in one passage by truths that may be clearly revealed in another, or by the *analogy of faith*,—is one plainly to be justified on this principle. Within the limits of the same human authorship the principle is readily admitted and largely employed; and the obscurities of an author are explained by the analogy of the system of opinion which he has plainly avowed and advocated in other places of his

writings. If the different books of Scripture, although written by different men, and at dates widely separated from each other, are yet, in the proper and highest view of them, the work of the one inspiring Spirit, there can be no difficulty felt in applying the principle to all the writings so inspired. The refusal to modify our canons of interpretation to the extent demanded by this peculiarity of the sacred volume, amounts to a practical denial of the same supernatural authorship belonging to it all.

III. The divine foreknowledge which in Scripture is seen to ally itself in so many instances to the shortsighted intelligence of man, distinguishes the sacred writings from all others, and modifies our ordinary principles of interpretation in their application to the Bible.

Comparing divine with human authorship, there is a marked difference in this respect. In the case of human authors, they have, generally speaking, but one end in view in their writings, and that is to make known their present meaning in the language best suited to convey it. When men write in earnest, and with simplicity, there are not intentionally two meanings in their words, liable to misunderstanding or fitted to mislead. If it is their sole object to convey to others the real meaning of what they say, they will endeavour to avoid everything like a double sense in their language, or any use of terms naturally open to different constructions. There may be indeed instances in which men write for the purpose of concealing their views and misleading their readers, and purposely employ language open to different interpretations. Or there may be some peculiar kinds of literary composition, as Butler has remarked, in which it is the very object to maintain throughout a double meaning, and to conceal under an equivocal form of words a twofold application of them. But, setting aside such exceptional cases, the general rule of human writings is, that there is no more than one meaning in the writing, and the one meaning intended by the author; and that a double sense

or application of the language is not only not intended by the author, but is inadmissible. Anything beyond what was in the mind or view of the original author, is held to be excluded from the authorship; and in interpreting his writing, one sense, and no more than one, is in all ordinary cases presupposed or implied in our interpretation.

The divine foreknowledge, when it allies itself to the shortseeing intelligence of man, and speaks through the same words, must necessarily lead to a modification of such a rule of interpretation in the case of Scripture language. If the prophetic element is not to be blotted out from the page of the Bible, we must be prepared to acknowledge in the statements of its human authors a foresight that did not belong to them as men, and a meaning beyond what was in their own minds when they wrote.

The very notion of predictive prophecy seems to imply, and an examination of the Scripture language in which it is embodied will confirm the view, that there are two conditions involved in it. In the first place, whatever reference to the future may be implied in prophecy, it must, in some respects, be adapted and adjusted to the present, if its language is to be intelligible in any sense or to any extent to the original hearers, and not altogether an unknown tongue. But, in the second place, if it is to be predictive prophecy, it will rise above the level of the present, and oftentimes reach beyond what is known or understood either by him who speaks or by them who hear the prediction.

The first condition is involved in the fact that the prophets in their predictions did not cease to be men or to speak to men, and were not reduced to the level of machines to give forth words which had no meaning to themselves or to their hearers. The whole contents of their words might be unknown both to them and to others; their predictions, embracing events in the distant future, might be understood at the time when uttered only in part; in comparison with what was intelligible to them, much more might be unintelligible in the prophecy. But still it must have had a signification for



the present hearers, however incomplete, unless we are prepared to believe that both speakers and hearers in Old Testament predictions were dealt with as unconscious instruments set up to give out and take in sounds inarticulate and unmeaning. The inspired men who bore to their contemporaries the messages of God that reached forward to distant days and told of future events, may have been like children sent by a human parent to carry his communications to another. The child may not comprehend in all respects the message entrusted to him; its full significance and bearing he may be utterly unacquainted with; its very language in many points may be a mystery to his understanding. But even to the child the message has a present significance, which makes him something more than the unconscious instrument to convey it to another; at the worst, he understands enough of it to enable him to act intelligently and not mechanically in the transmission; and he may have ideas in part of its fuller import, which stir him up to inquire diligently after its complete meaning.

We cannot doubt that it was so with prophets under the ancient economy. Although as prophets they spoke and wrote of future events which the future only made plain, yet, even where the full application of the words was most deeply shrouded in the darkness of the coming time, they had a present meaning both to speaker and hearer which enabled them to see and know in part. The inspired men understood enough of the words they uttered to constitute them intelligent and not unintelligent instruments in declaring them; and enough, too, to stir within them earnest desires and anxious thoughts to inquire and to seek to know more. Prophecy both to speakers and hearers in the ancient Church, laid a foundation for faith and hope in the future, even where it spoke most darkly, and was known only in part. The revelation of future truth was incomplete, and prophecy only bit by bit gave knowledge of God's coming salvation; but it was a knowledge to the then present hearers, true so far as it was given, and understood at least to the extent of

sustaining the faith of the early believers in a present and gracious God, and their hope in the Saviour to come.

There was then always a present meaning in predictive prophecy adjusted to the understanding and the mind of the parties to whom it was originally addressed. It took hold on the present, even when it looked forward to the future.

But prophecy was often connected with type, and derived from the type a fuller explanation of its meaning than its own words standing alone supplied. The double line of prophecy and type running parallel to each other and illustrating each other throughout the whole of the prophetic period, is a remarkable feature in the Old Testament economy. There is the prediction in words; and there is the same prediction in actions. There is verbal prophecy, and there is typical prophecy. The same truths are sometimes embodied in words, and sometimes in symbols and types,—in outward ordinances expressly instituted to picture them, or in events and persons found in the course of human history, and selected to represent and declare them. Prophecy runs its twofold course throughout the whole of the Old Testament period, from the first promise given to our first parents in words, and embodied in the ordinance of sacrifice appointed for them, down through the revelations of truth given part after part in the oral or written teachings of prophets, and the revelations of the same truth made in the ordinances and rites and typical services enjoined first to the patriarchs, and afterwards more largely to the Mosaic Church.

These two methods, the verbal and the typical, of declaring the mind of God in prophecy, differed only in form, and were fitted and designed to cast mutual light and illustration upon each other. The verbal prediction threw light upon the typical, and the typical upon the verbal. It was the same revelation of divine things in both. However imperfectly the saints of the ancient Church understood the complete truth contained in either when they spoke of the future, they had a present meaning to them intelligible and true. Verbal prophecy was not altogether an unknown tongue.

Typical prophecy was something more than a mechanical or magic ceremony. In the commentary upon each other's meaning which they naturally supplied, there was a teaching adjusted to the level of the understanding of the ancient Church, and sufficient to impart knowledge and sustain faith.

The second condition of predictive prophecy is necessarily implied in the very notion of prediction. If it seemed good to God to instruct the Church in Old Testament times by partial disclosures of truth afterwards to be fully revealed, and to encourage and sustain the faith of the early believers by anticipations of a Saviour to come, it was necessarily involved in such a condition of things that the prophetic language employed, while level to the understanding, in so far, of the present hearers, should also rise up above that understanding when it took hold upon the future.

It would have been impossible, from the very nature of the case, to have taught to the ancient Church in the infancy of revelation all those truths which the coming of Christ in the flesh alone could declare and explain, and which have been made plain and fully intelligible only through means of a completed canon. It would have been inconsistent with the plan of God, even had it been not impossible, to have made full communication at once in the very earliest prophecies of all that, step by step for thousands of years, was gradually disclosed, as the revelation of God, truth after truth, was progressively opened up. But if the future salvation of His grace was even partially to be announced, and the promise of it disclosing, in however small a measure, its future grandeur, were to animate the hearts and sustain the hope of believers in former days, it was necessary that the prophetic announcement should often transcend the limits of what was understood at the time. And hence, in the case both of verbal prophecy and typical prophecy, there is often a meaning in the language and type employed that rises far above and stretches much beyond anything that at the time could possibly have been comprehended.

The divine idea underlying the human, gives to the words

of prediction and to the ordinances a meaning not in the contemplation of the persons who employed them, and yet a meaning true to the prophecy or type employed, and rightly to be educed from them. They take hold by anticipation, and by a divine foresight, of a distant future unknown at the time, or only partially seen. They embrace a plenitude of truth which a future revelation, after an interval of thousands of years, alone was clearly or completely to declare, and which it required thousands of years to educate the mind of the Church to understand and receive. It was necessary, even from the beginning, that partial disclosures of the future things of God should be made, else the faith of believers would have perished utterly. But the partial revelation only showed how much was unrevealed. Its words pointed to truths far beyond what they told at the time, and what the speaker apprehended.

The existence of prophecy and type to such an extent in the Scriptures, marks a difference, and a most important one, between inspired and uninspired writings. The difference not only justifies, but demands, a corresponding difference in the methods and rules of interpretation to be applied to them. It may be a true canon of criticism in regard to any human book, that one sense, and no more than one, is to be sought for in any ordinary writing, and *that* the sense that was in the mind of the author when he wrote. But such a canon is inapplicable to Scripture, if the fact of its inspiration is admitted at all, and if it be acknowledged that the mind of God in addition to the mind of man is contained in the language. It is competent, indeed, for any person to deny that such a double authorship of the sacred volume is a possible thing, or that God could so order the minds and words of inspired men as to convey by means of them to distant ages the knowledge of truths beyond the apprehension of the original writers. It is competent for any man to make such a denial, if he thinks himself able to prove it. But if it be admitted that Scripture, while exhibiting the minds and language of its human authors, contains also a revelation of

the mind of God, then it is impossible to take up the position, that the language of the text can express nothing but what was in the mind of the sacred penman, and must always be interpreted accordingly.

No one can read the Bible without being struck with the multitude of cases in which both our Lord and His inspired apostles draw from the prophecies and types of the Old Testament economy a meaning far beyond, and different from, that which the writers who recorded them could have seen in them, and appeal to the fulfilment of them, when so interpreted, in confirmation of the truth of events and doctrines. It is impossible, without charging falsehood upon such interpretations, to get rid of the fact that there is a meaning in prophecy beyond what prophets meant, and a fulness of truth in types which was seen only in part at the time. And if this be admitted, the canons of interpretation applicable to human writings must be modified in their application to Scripture, to the extent of allowing that there may be a sense in the language of its authors beyond what they saw or intended.

I have occasionally employed the phrase, the *double sense* of prophecy, although the expression is true only in a loose and popular way. Perhaps the truer and better expression is, the double fulfilment of prophecy.

The language of prophecy often contains a meaning beyond what was in the mind of the prophet. He saw only in part what it signified. His understanding of its import was not complete. But in such cases his understanding of it was not the same as its true interpretation, only in the sense of its being incomplete, or as a part is not the same as the whole. This is true of many predictions and types; but it does not, in the strict use of language, amount to a double sense or double fulfilment of prophecy. The prophet's apprehension of it did not differ from the right apprehension of the language, in the way of one of the meanings being inconsistent with or contradictory to another. The two meanings given to the same prophecy differ only as the one is a part of the



other which includes it, but does not differ from it in the way of being independent of it or inconsistent with it. They differ only in being, the one a more full, and the other a less full, apprehension of the same prophecy.

But there are prophecies of another kind which have a double fulfilment. In those instances where the line of verbal prediction and the line of typical prediction, always parallel and connected, point to the same fulfilment,—where the prophecy and the type terminate in the same event,—it may happen that the prior announcement in words answers in the first place to the type, and then along with the type seeks a further fulfilment in the antitype. When the verbal prediction goes before the type, it may in the first place be a prophecy of the type; but in the second place, and taking up the type in connection with it, they may both find their proper interpretation in the application to the antitype.

The prediction by the prophet Nathan to David, that the Lord would give him a son to sit upon the throne after him, and to build the house of the Lord, was one that primarily referred to Solomon, and found its fulfilment in him. But if we are to credit the apostle, the same prediction found its application in Christ. In this case we find the reconciliation of these two interpretations in the fact that Solomon, of whom the prediction was primarily spoken, was himself a type of Christ; so that the words of Nathan found a double fulfilment, first in Solomon the type, and secondly, along with the type, in Christ the antitype. But even in predictions of this class, which undoubtedly have a double fulfilment, there is not, properly speaking, a twofold sense of the prophecy. There is no more than one sense, although fulfilled twice over. The correspondence between the type and the antitype causes the language which predicts the former, to be at the same time a prophecy of the latter. The prophet, who understands the meaning of the words in their first application, may hardly, if at all, understand them in their second. Yet the second fulfilment is not so much different from the first, as a repetition of it on a higher and wider

platform. The type and the antitype are seen as one from the point of view of the prophecy which foretells both. But this twofold fulfilment furnishes no room for equivocation or doubt as to the meaning of the prophecy, and as to its legitimate interpretation, as if, when one event failed to accomplish the prediction, it were lawful to interpret the words differently, and to seek its fulfilment in another and opposite. It is not so much a double sense of the same words, as a double fulfilment of the same prediction; thus supplying a twofold proof of the divine foreknowledge that inspired them.

If a revelation from God in the language of men is to be admitted at all,—if the presence of inspiration is confessed in the case of prophecy and type,—it constitutes such a difference between Scripture and any other book, as to demand to the same extent a difference of interpretation.

IV. The divine objects in revelation, especially in connection with the measure of light that is given and withheld, have fashioned the Bible differently from other books, and have made the principles of interpretation applicable to it different.

In the case of human compositions, one of the first objects contemplated by the author is to make himself understood, and to convey his meaning in the way that shall render it easily and completely intelligible. Unless in exceptional cases, this is the aim that guides an author in the presentation and arrangement of his thoughts in writing, and determines the language that he employs. And hence the rule of interpretation which, except in peculiar cases, is applicable to human writings, that the most obvious meaning is, generally speaking, the true meaning, or the one intended to be conveyed by the writer. This rule is found to apply, except in those occasional instances in which a man may have some reason for employing language to conceal rather than to explain his meaning, or when, from inability or inadvertency, he may fail to employ the language best fitted to express it.

But this canon of interpretation does not apply universally

to Scripture, or at least does not apply without modification and limitation. The meaning of Scripture is not always expressed in the clearest language that could have been employed. There is a measure of obscurity in the way in which the truths of revelation have been conveyed to us. These truths might have been communicated to us with a degree of clearness which is not found in the Scripture page. And this obscurity is not due altogether to the nature of the truths revealed, as being many of them beyond the reach of the human understanding, and essentially mysterious. But the obscurity is to be explained by the objects contemplated by God in His revelation, and by the form which in consequence has been impressed upon it.

In the first place, it was to be a revelation gradually unfolded, and given only in part from one age to another; and so the partial disclosure had about it necessarily a measure of that obscurity which an incomplete and not a full declaration of a truth must always have. In the second place, it was designed to foreshadow by prophecy and type the truths and events of distant times, that even before they were fully made known, the anticipation of them, in however imperfect a way, might become to the Church of God the foundation for faith and hope; and so there is an obscurity about the prophetic announcements inseparable from such a mode of communicating truth. And in the third place, over and above these causes of obscurity in the Scripture revelation, there is a measure of darkness mingled with the light in its announcements of truth; to be explained on the principle that the Bible itself is intended to be a discipline for faith, in which they that love the light shall find it, and they that love the darkness better shall not. There is enough of obscurity in Scripture to prove a stumblingblock in the way of them that seek a cause of offence; but there is no surer promise in the Bible than this, that while the wicked shall not understand, the wise shall understand.

The objects contemplated by God in the extraordinary communication which He has made to His creatures, are

different from the objects contemplated by one man in making a communication to another. In this latter case the maker of the communication desires to convey it in the language that is most distinct and least liable to misconstruction, in order that he may gain his first object in the communication, which is, that it shall be understood. But beyond its being understood, God had the further object in view to try the faith and to discipline the moral nature of man in the very act of his coming to understand it. And for this end, the measure of light, and no less the measure of darkness, found in the sacred volume, are proportioned and fitted for our probation state, and designed to constitute a spiritual discipline for good. It is on this principle that we can understand our Lord's saying to His disciples: Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God, but to others in parables.

The objects, then, in view of the divine mind in making the Scripture volume what it is, supply an explanation of the degree in which light and darkness are proportioned in the record of truth, and of the measure of clearness and obscurity that is found in it. The difference in this respect between the Bible and any other book calls for a corresponding difference in the method of interpreting them. The canon applicable to any ordinary human writing, that the most obvious meaning is generally the true meaning, is not to be applied in the same unlimited sense to Scripture.

V. The divine fulness of thought and truth found in Scripture, distinguishes it in a marked manner from other books, and leads to a corresponding difference in the methods of interpretation to be employed in seeking to ascertain its meaning.

In speaking of the divine fulness of meaning contained in Scripture, I do not refer to those passages which are prophetic, and which, because in present language they declare the future truth, markedly distinguish the Bible from any human book. I refer to those truths which are contained in Scripture, implicitly rather than by express or formal asser-

tion, and which are found underlying the words rather than exhibited on the surface of them.

We are accustomed, even in the case of human compositions, to recognise the distinction between what is implied in any statement, and what is expressed; and frequently we see and confess that much more is meant than what is formally stated. With minds of a higher order, and in writings pregnant with deeper thought, there are often truths suggested and involved in the language of the author, more and better than those actually spoken. It is the same with the authorship of God. There are divine ideas and truths underlying the surface of Scripture language, and really contained in its statements, which are not expressly or directly stated; but which are a part of the mind of God as much as any that are formally and articulately uttered. What is stated in the shape of formal affirmation is little, compared with what is involved and implied in the words, without being expressly affirmed. Scripture inferences, rightly drawn from Scripture, are as much a part of revelation as its express letter. What is contained in the Word of God under the form of implied truth, is, no less than the words themselves, a fruit of inspired wisdom.

Nothing else could be expected when the mind of the Infinite Intelligence was embodied in human language. Beneath and within the letter of such a revelation, there is a length and breadth, and height and depth of divine wisdom inexhaustible, looking out upon us from its words with a fulness which the words cannot contain. Far under the surface of its language there is a well of truth springing up unto everlasting life; and it needs but that we should draw from its depths, to learn that it is divine and unfathomable. The letter of the Scripture page, even though inspired by God, is not so deep as the mind of God that is beneath it.

In interpreting the language of a human author, we are compelled to adopt a different rule for the truths that are directly expressed in his words, and for the truths that are contained in them implicitly and not expressly. His own



mind and intention in his statements may very often not go beyond the former, or the ideas which are directly and formally asserted; while the latter, or the ideas implied and involved in his words, may not be adverted to at all, but lie out of his view and consideration. The language in which he expressly affirms the truth in his thoughts, may really suggest and contain other truths in addition, not at all in his thoughts, and not meant to be affirmed; the statement in itself, or especially when combined and compared with his other statements, may justify deductions from it far beyond what he understood in making it; and conclusions even the opposite of what he intended may be legitimately drawn from it. All this is familiar to us in interpreting the language of our fellow-men, whether spoken or written.

Hence the canon of interpretation so often forgotten in practice, yet so readily acknowledged in all fair and honourable controversy, that it is not allowable to charge upon an author the consequences of his statements when not expressly avowed or adopted, even although these consequences may be necessarily involved in the statements. The consequences may not have been seen, and were probably not in the mind of the author in using the words from which they are drawn, so that he is not responsible for them further than by the employment of language which unintentionally implied them. Hence, also, another rule of interpretation applicable to the case of an author whose opinions on some disputed point are gathered from statements found in his writings when speaking on some other and perhaps very different question, and when the point in debate was not at all in his view. Such indirect and incidental opinions are hardly of any value at all in their bearing on the controverted point; the author in all likelihood never meaning that they should be accepted in such an application, and not contemplating that they could be so applied. In almost all cases of uninspired writings, it is unwarrantable and unsafe, when we inquire into the meaning of the author, to extend our interpretation much beyond the limits of his express statements, in the way of drawing

from them consequences which may be truly contained in them, but yet were not in the line of his thoughts and aims when he made them. It may be allowable, or even necessary, to do so for the purpose of showing the proper tendency or true results of his opinions; but it is not justifiable to do so with the view of charging upon him such consequences as his actual meaning, or as if he were responsible for them.

But the reason which restrains us from holding a human author answerable for the consequences deducible from his words, and which limits our interpretation of them to the formal and direct statements they express, rather than to the truths implicitly involved and contained in them, has no place in connection with the written Word of God. If that Word was fashioned by infallible inspiration to declare the mind of God, it must contain a fulness of wisdom past finding out; and he who both revealed the truth and embodied it in language best fitted to express it, saw all that was contained in Scripture, whether in the shape of direct and formal assertion, or in the way of necessary implication and consequence. He knew that its words not only expressly declared certain articles of faith, but also by good and necessary inference involved many others; and the second class of truths, equally with the first, were in the mind of God when He moved His inspired servants to select such and such forms of speech rather than others, in order to record the revelation given to them.

The consequences that are deduced from Scripture statements by unavoidable inference, and more largely still the consequences that are deduced from a comparison of the various Scripture statements among themselves, were foreseen by infinite wisdom in the very act of supernaturally inspiring the record from which they are inferred; and the Revealer not only knew that men would deduce such consequences, but designed that they should do so. Both the contents and the form of the revelation proceed on this idea. In the contents there is a fulness of divine wisdom which, the deeper we go in our inquiries, only seems to be the deeper; and in the

form there is an adaptation to the minds of rational creatures, that both invites and warrants them to compare Scripture with Scripture, and to draw from the comparison new deductions of truth. In interpreting the writings of men, we are stopped at the very surface, and are forbidden to go beyond the letter of their express statements, lest we should draw from them a meaning which, however really contained in the words, was not in the mind of the authors. In interpreting the book of God we cannot go too deep, or pursue our deductions too far, provided only they are good and necessary consequences that we draw from it, because we know that there are truths in it even beyond what we have found out, and that all these truths were in the mind of Him who inspired it.

The example of our Lord Himself, and His inspired apostles, both warrants and requires us, in interpreting Scripture, to go beyond the outward letter, and to seek the manifold and deeper truths that are to be educed from it by good and necessary consequence. To rest contented with the words of inspired men, neglecting the fuller meaning beneath, or to require that, for every truth we receive as God's truth, we should show proof that it is set down expressly in so many terms in Scripture, is a practice condemned by many instances in the Word of God. The remarkable example of our Lord, in deducing by good and necessary consequence the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead from the name given to Jehovah at the bush, is an instance in point. That doctrine was very far indeed from being expressly asserted in the language from which it was taught; it could be brought out of the language only by a process of reasoning not by any means obvious or immediate. Yet the inference from the language was put upon the same level of authority, and held to be as much a part of the revelation of divine truth, as the name of Jehovah expressly set down in the written Word; and our Lord blamed the Jews for not knowing the Scriptures in not understanding the doctrine. In the same way the apostles in their writings, by many examples, indicate the

warrantableness and the duty of drawing from the inspired volume truths that are not expressly, but only by implication, contained in its statements, and of putting these Scripture consequences on the same level with Scripture itself.

The reason is manifest. If the Bible be the divine record of divine truth, it must contain within it a wisdom wider and deeper than its words; and the deductions of doctrine made from its statements on a comparison between them, if *truly* drawn, are as much part of God's meaning and of His revelation,—being indeed virtually contained in it,—as these statements themselves.

In the Westminster Confession of Faith we are told that the whole counsel of God is either expressly set down in Scripture, or by *good and necessary consequence may be deduced* from Scripture. In order to their being accepted as articles of faith, and really a part of revealed truth, the consequences drawn from Scripture must be *good*, or truly contained in the inspired statements from which they profess to be taken. They must also be *necessary*, or consequences that are unavoidably forced upon the mind, upon an honest and intelligent application of it to the Scripture page. If they be consequences of this kind, they must express truths which are virtually, although not in so many express words, contained in Scripture, and so share in the divine authority which all Scripture statements possess. Any right method of interpretation applicable to Scripture must take account of this peculiarity, which remarkably distinguishes it from all human writings.

The extent to which the principle of Scripture consequences is available in gathering up the meaning of the Word of God, is very great. It is hardly possible to conceive of a revelation from God in any form from which no inferences could be drawn, upon which we might legitimately found our faith, equally with its literal or express statements. It is impossible at least to conceive of a revelation assuming the shape found in the Bible, which teaches not by abstract and dogmatic propositions only, but by a thousand methods of historical

example and incidental and indirect exhibition of truth, that would be possible or intelligible on the principle that each single proposition must be interpreted by itself and apart from every other, and that no comparison of Scripture with Scripture, and no deduction from the comparison, were lawful in framing our creed.

Let any man number over but a few out of the fundamental articles of revealed truth as they are received by the Church of Christ, and say if any one of them could have been established and proved, as it is universally believed, if we had been restricted to what is formally set down in so many words in Scripture, and forbidden to go beyond this in the way of comparison of, and inference from, Scripture statements. The doctrines of the Trinity, of the Godhead of the Spirit, of the union of the divine and human natures in the one person of Immanuel, could not have been proved without the help of Scripture consequences, and would not be believed as articles of divine truth, unless we accepted these consequences as of the same authority with the verbal statements of revelation itself. Such consequences, if they be 'good and necessary,' are nothing but the meaning of revelation, and are better than its words: they are the life, and not the letter; they are the truth, and not the form of the truth. Beyond the mute and inarticulate signs which express them, they introduce the student of Scripture to the mind of God beneath the sign; and, sitting by the wells which the prophets dug, he will find that the fountain of truth is divine and inexhaustible.

Any rules of interpretation applicable to Scripture must be fashioned upon the principle, that there is a meaning to be brought out of the Word of God that is not found in any writings of man.



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